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The Path to Personal Salvation: The Hermetic Trope of Self-Mastery in Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton

Cassandra Amundson

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**THE PATH TO PERSONAL SALVATION: THE HERMETIC TROPE OF
SELF-MASTERY IN SHAKESPEARE, BACON, AND MILTON**

BY

CASSANDRA CHERIE AMUNDSON

B.A., ENGLISH, EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, 2000
M.A., ENGLISH, EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, 2003

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

English

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2010

DEDICATION

In memory of my mother, Dorothy Anne Wilcox, who passed away before she could see
me accomplish a major step in the journey of my life.

And to my father, Dr. Wesley E. Amundson, who has always been an unwavering
supporter of my ideas and vision.

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I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Barry Gaines, a recognized Shakespearean scholar, for always believing in me and giving untiring support and encouragement to help me complete my project. And I express gratitude to Dr. Marissa Greenberg, an expert in Renaissance drama, for her prompt replies and her insightful and valuable recommendations. Thanks to Dr. Michelle Kells who assisted me in my professional development and helped me formulate the rhetorical setting for my project. And finally, thanks to Dr. Mary Domski for contributing her discipline-specific philosophical perspective.

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**THE PATH TO PERSONAL SALVATION: THE HERMETIC TROPE OF
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ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines Renaissance authors' investment in the Hermetic tradition. This tradition is based on the Hellenistic Egyptian philosophical-theological writings ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, which emerged in parallel with early Christianity, Neoplatonism, and Gnosticism. The Hermetic tradition gained importance in the Renaissance with Marsilio Ficino's translations and soon became an alternative avenue for the exploration in the spiritual conception of the "self" as divine, a conception previously closed off by medieval orthodox religious and secular traditions. I argue that principal figures in the Renaissance and Restoration—Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton—were engaged in constructing this Hermetic mode of thinking to illustrate individuals' ability and responsibility for "saving" themselves through the gnosis of self-discovery, the gnosis that emphasized living with and in the presence of God. The Hermetic discourse is well documented in the history discipline by such scholars as Lynn Thorndike, Frances Yates, and D. P. Walker. Yet, in the literary discipline, there have not been sufficient discussions for locating the influence of the Hermetism on Renaissance and Restoration literary authors. In this way, I fill the gap in Renaissance scholarship and classroom teaching by showing that these authors used rhetorical maneuvers and symbols to illustrate the Hermetic mode of thinking as a major defining feature in their arguments for a new epistemology.

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The Path to Personal Salvation: The Hermetic Trope of Self-Mastery in Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton

The Humanist movement, the Reformation, and the methods of the New Science,¹ give us a picture of Renaissance construction of knowledge as divided into two categories: knowledge formed via religion and knowledge formed via philosophy. The purpose of this dissertation is to show that many philosophers and literary authors in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, namely Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton, combined elements from religious doctrines and secular philosophy to construct a third category of knowledge based on the Hermetic tradition, which espoused mankind's ability to regain a divine-like status in this life. The Hermetic tradition gained importance first in the Italian Renaissance with Marsilio Ficino's 15th-century translations and soon afterward authors, such as Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (German 1533), John Dee (English 1558), Althanasius Kircher (German 1636), and Ralph Cudworth (English 1678), further disseminated this philosophy into intellectual spheres in England and the rest of the continent. The Hermetic discourse promoted an alternative yet parallel route to both the religious and humanistic modes of thought. It is my goal to illustrate Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton's engagement in the construction of a new epistemology, which advocated the Hermetic tenet that individuals have the ability and responsibility for "saving" themselves through the gnosis of self-discovery, the gnosis that emphasizes living with and in the presence of God.

The main goal of this dissertation is to illustrate that these authors used certain occult images, diction, and metaphors as signposts to help readers understand their

¹ I use the term "New Science" to refer to the new methods of scientific activity in the 16th and 17th centuries in both the directions of applied mathematics and natural philosophy.

arguments for a new epistemology, which combined the Hermetic and Christian discourses. In this endeavor, I refrain from merely enumerating occult images and rhetoric for the sake of cataloguing authors' references to the occult,² such as Jonson's list of alchemical terminology in *The Alchemist*, which function to show off his knowledge rather than promote a deeper philosophical message about self-transformation. Rather my goal is to illuminate the core of authors' epistemological arguments for a philosophical-theological mode of living and to illustrate that the new mentality of Hermetism³ is a predominant mode of thinking that finds a platform for discussion within all three genres of drama, fiction, and poetry. My argument here is not that these authors were publicly endorsing the Hermetic tradition in their texts but rather that the underlying philosophy of this tradition provided for them an alternative yet parallel spiritual mode of thinking to orthodox Christianity,⁴ namely that individuals are their own saviors and that they can become mortal gods.

² Since I am focusing on the philosophical message of the Hermetic texts, the backbone of Renaissance occult philosophy, I will refrain from the discussion on Renaissance magic. The Hermetic texts are not concerned with the practice of magic, such as spirit conjuring or magic spells; rather they deal with philosophical/theological issues. For those interested in the discussion on the magus and magic in the Renaissance, see John S. Mebane's *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age*, Frances Yates' *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, D. P. Walker's *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, and David Woodman's *White Magic and English Renaissance Drama*.

³ A trend in scholarship has been to use the term *Hermetism* to denote the philosophical message in the Hermetic texts and to use the term *Hermeticism* to denote the occult offshoots of this philosophy in such practices as magic, Cabala astrology, and alchemy. See Faivre, 109.

⁴ Throughout the dissertation, I simplify and condense the complex and varying status of orthodox Christianity in order to target what the Hermetic philosophy was able to provide for Renaissance and Restoration thinkers that Catholic or Protestant Christianity could not, namely that mankind can regain his divinity, his god-self, in this lifetime. Christianity during this time underwent radical and dynamic changes. Many thinkers of the age were engaged in religious and political debates regarding mankind's spiritual direction, leading to Reformation and Counter-Reformation actions. In the climate of Italian Catholicism, Ficino, Lazarelli, Nesi and others were engaged in unifying the Hermetic teachings with their Christian ones. Similarly, in the hotbed of Protestant activity, German authors such as Trithemius, Agrippa, Kircher, and the anonymous Rosicrucian pamphlet writers were engaged in incorporating the Hermetic discourse into their Protestant religious directions. In the Restoration, such English writers as Cudworth, More, and Sterry embraced both Protestant the Hermetic beliefs and employed certain Hermetic tenets to argue against the mechanistic philosophies of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza. In this way, I do not claim that Renaissance and Restoration authors sought to abandon their Catholic or Protestant Christian

Since people in the Renaissance, from celebrated writers to the nonliterate, understood life in and through tropes,⁵ I will illustrate the Hermetic trope of self-mastery in Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton. I use trope in a general rather than a specific sense, not as specific as the rhetorical trope of apostrophe, synecdoche, or repetition. Tropes generate imagery with connotations that function over and above one specific literal meaning; thus tropes function as containers, which convey larger systems of association just as language functions as a container or vehicle to express abstract ideas and physical experiences. In this way, I use the trope of self-mastery as a theoretical container to describe the entire Hermetic exercise of training one's soul to becoming a self-determining being (to regaining one's god-like nature).⁶ I examine a work of drama from the later half of the 16th century with Shakespeare's *King Lear* first performed in 1606, a work of fiction from the early half of the 17th century with Bacon's *New Atlantis* written in 1626 but published posthumously in 1627, and a work of poetry from the later half of the 17th century with Milton's *Paradise Lost* published in 1667.⁷ My analysis will show that the trope of self-mastery located in the Hermetic mode of thinking bears predominance across genres in Renaissance and Restoration literature.

understanding; rather, I argue that many authors attempted to include the Hermetic belief in mankind's divinity into their Christian views. This is seen in Renaissance authors' arguments, such as Ficino, Patrizi, Bruno, and Pico, that Hermetic philosophy and Christian teaching should be understood in conjunction with one another. See section entitled "A History of the Hermetic Tradition: From the Ancient World to the Early Modern" in this Introduction chapter.

⁵ See Carrithers and Hardy's *Age of Iron*.

⁶ The Hermetic texts illustrate that becoming a self-determining being (becoming god-like) is the purpose of life. See *Sto* VI: "a man must train his soul in this life...men who love the body will never see the vision of the Beautiful and Good" (163); *Sto* XVII: "Souls...is self-determining" (173). Man needs to form "a habit of will that is well-balanced." "For their well-balanced habit of will take from repugnance its excess, and raises to equality that which is lacking in desire. And repugnance and desire are commanded by the intelligent substance; this takes the lead, like a commander, and the reason accompanies it, like a counselor" (174); and *Sto* XVIII: "the intelligent substance in us is self-determining" (174).

⁷ *Paradise Lost* reflects the Hermetic idea of experiencing life as a form of education regarding individuals' humanity and divinity. See Milton chapter.

Using Trope as a Way to Understand the Process for Obtaining Salvation

Between 1550 and 1670, people were desperately concerned with salvation and thus turned to devotional books, sermons, traveling preachers, relics, even magic to obtain religious certainty.⁸ It is in this context that the Hermetic trope of self-mastery begins to take shape again, rekindled from the philosophical-theological⁹ contexts of antiquity. Authors who articulated this mode of thinking were indeed searching for salvation, but a salvation distinct from orthodox Christian writers who argued that salvation was only possible through Jesus the Christ. Richard Hooker in *Ecclesiasticall Politie* (1594) makes the argument that only sermons and the Scripture will “[save] souls” (5:22:60). This salvation occurs after death not in life because a great divide exists between that which is human and that which is divine.¹⁰ Yet, reintroduced with Ficino’s translations of the Hermetic texts in 1460, the belief, that the boundary between humanity and the divine is permeable, began to spread throughout Europe and England. Those who were searching for an alternative to the proscriptive church dogmas of original sin and determinism, found in the Hermetic texts a spiritual outlet because the texts emphasize self-knowledge as the path to salvation. It is my contention that the general rhetorical concept, the trope of self-mastery, encapsulates the mentality of the Hermetic process for becoming a self-determining being, a mortal god. The Hermetic esoteric tradition espouses self-development techniques for how one could train the soul in order to know the self and thus know God. I argue that *King Lear*, *New Atlantis*, and *Paradise Lost*

⁸ See Thomas.

⁹ The Hermetic texts are classified as philosophical-theological because they present a unified perspective of the philosophical pursuit of knowledge of nature and physical existence and the theological pursuit for the understanding of God.

¹⁰ This was the main tenet of Calvinism as illustrated in the Canons of the Synod of Dort.

contain epistemological allegories of this Hermetic philosophical-theological exercise of training the soul to obtain one's own salvation.

Additionally, what I aim to illustrate is that the hermeneutical¹¹ tenet regarding individuals' divinity has its origin in not only the Hermetic discourse, but also Platonic, Gnostic, and Christian thought. For instance, the meaning of Jesus' teaching, that the "Kingdom of heaven is within," that all individuals have the ability to create their own salvation, was forgotten—nay overshadowed by the Church's insistence on original sin and the necessity of priest mediation. Whereas the Bible is not transparent about the detailed steps one takes to attain to salvation, the Hermetic teaching articulates that "salvation" is obtained through the gnosis¹² of self-discovery and that the journey of self-discovery includes an understanding of the material world. The goal is to come in congruity with nature's processes by imitating nature's works because with these acts comes knowledge of the self, knowledge of God, and understanding that human beings are "god." In this way, the Hermetic texts view life as a program of spiritual education. This mentality is echoed in the famous maxim of the age as expressed in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."¹³ Although Jaques is melancholy about the process of returning to a second childhood in old age—the loss of one's identity and becoming a non-entity in some respects—the saying illustrates the fundamental Hermetic argument that the purpose of life in the physical world is to *experiment* with soul development.

¹¹ The term hermeneutic, "to make clear" or "interpret," is a derivative of the name of Hermes.

¹² Gnosis, one of the Greek words for knowledge, γνῶσις, is the knowledge of spiritual truths.

¹³ In *Advancement*, Bacon shares a similar view of life as a stage: "we are sufficiently a great theatre to each other" (23). In this view, Bacon illustrates that human beings can help each other progress and advance in understanding themselves, the world, and God.

Corporeality as a Vehicle for a Divine Education: Revising the Reason for the Fall

Orthodox Jews and Christians alike understood humanity's attempt to cross the gulf between the human and the divine, humanity's attempt to usurp divine knowledge and privileges in Genesis 1-11, as the reason for the Fall. And thus the belief that individuals could not attain to salvation on their own, first outlined by the early Church Fathers Clement of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo and expounded upon by subsequent Christian writers, became the prominent belief in Christian doctrines of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and Restoration. Yet, with Ficino's translations of Plato's *Timaeus* and the Egyptian *Hermetica*,¹⁴ the belief that mankind had the ability to both obtain salvation and know God in this life permeated the minds of philosophers who sought to reintroduce the mentality of ancient philosophers of the soul. German Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa in *De Triplici* (1516) attributes Adam's sin not to his efforts to obtain knowledge of God but to his indulgence in using a lower, animalic form of reason and appetite. Earlier than Agrippa, Italian Pico della Mirandola, using Ficino's translations of the Platonic and Hermetic texts which drew attention to the Hermetic tenet that human beings can become earthly gods, revises the story of the Fall into one about Adam's choice to leave the divine world to inhabit the earth. Pico writes in *Oration* (1486), to man, "it is granted to have what he chooses, to be what he wills to be" (par.7).¹⁵ In Pico's

¹⁴ The texts that comprise the *Hermetica*: 1) *Corpus Hermeticum* (CH) which Ficino published under the title *Pimander*, 2) *The Asclepius* (*Asc*), 3) *Stobaeus* excerpts (*Sto*), and 4) *Tabula Smaragdina* (*Tablet*).

¹⁵ Further Pico states: "Oh unsurpassed generosity of God the Father, Oh wondrous and unsurpassable felicity of man, to whom it is granted to have what he chooses, to be what he wills to be! The brutes, from the moment of their birth, bring with them, as Lucilius says, 'from their mother's womb' all that they will ever possess. The highest spiritual beings were, from the very moment of creation, or soon thereafter, fixed in the mode of being which would be theirs through measureless eternities. But upon man, at the moment of his creation, God bestowed seeds pregnant with all possibilities, the germs of every form of life. Whichever of these a man shall cultivate, the same will mature and bear fruit in him. If vegetative, he will become a plant; if sensual, he will become brutish; if rational, he will reveal himself a heavenly being; if intellectual, he will be an angel and the son of God. And if, dissatisfied with the lot of all creatures, he

revision, Adam is sinless; he merely chooses to exercise his free will to experience lower existence on earth rather than the higher life in heaven.

Pico's reassessment for why Adam chose to live on earth rather than paradise is reflective of the Hermetic view that life is a *course* one takes to learn how to become god-like. Similarly, this view is presented in other Gnostic texts that were written in parallel with the Hermetic texts: for instance, the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* illustrates that the human soul of heavenly origin descends to the lower part of the universe in a program of education.¹⁶ In the Hermetic tradition, human beings' corporeality and mortality are not deficiencies as they are in many other Gnostic texts¹⁷ and in Christian dogma of the Middle Ages. Rather, corporeality is a divine experience from which mankind can understand God's Word; for it is only in the manifestation of God's "archetypal Light and Mind,"¹⁸ to use the Hermetic terminology, or the manifestation of the Forms, to use Plato's terminology, that souls can obtain knowledge of Being (that which always is); it is only through experiencing "the word made flesh"¹⁹ in the world of becoming (the Platonic version of the Hermetic "coming into being") that mankind can come to illumination. This same concept is expressed in the Hermetic text *Tablula*

should recollect himself into the center of his own unity, he will there become one spirit with God, in the solitary darkness of the Father, Who is set above all things, himself transcend all creatures" (par.7).

¹⁶ This idea that individuals have come to the earthly realm to learn shares a connection with Aristotle's argument in *Poetics* that mankind should delight in images and objects of the physical world because this is how humans can learn about universals, from studying the representations. Yet, the Gnostic mindset was more bold in saying mankind's physical existence is for educational purposes.

¹⁷ Sethian and Manichaeism Gnosticism for instance regarded the body as intrinsically evil and therefore could not be the creation of a good God. I disagree with Roelof van de Broek's argument that the *Corpus*, specifically CH I and VII, presents a view that could lead to a deprecation of the body. CH VII does illustrate that the body is a "cloak of darkness," a "web of ignorance," "a prop of evil," "a bond of corruption," a "living death," etc.; but these depictions of the body as a "conscious corpse" are ones that describe people who have chosen to focus on living for material pursuits. For these people, the body is a "garment" that "holds" them down, meaning—their "garment" becomes a veil that inhibits them from "behold[ing] the beauty of the Truth, and the Good that abides within them (71). See van den Broek, 2.

¹⁸ See CH III.

¹⁹ John 1:14

Smaragdina as a soul's need of a physical world experience to learn perfection of being:

"His force and power is perfect, if it / be turned into earth."²⁰

Many Renaissance authors' reconfigurations of mankind's Fall, combined with their epistemological proposal for a new image of human beings as masters of the natural world and their own destinies, illustrates their investments in the Hermetic belief that mankind's desire for knowledge of God was not the source of sin. For instance, Bacon argues in *The Advancement of Learning* that the Fall did not occur because of Adam and Eve's pursuit of knowledge; for indeed mankind has the ability to know God:

"Concerning Divine Philosophie, or Naturall Theologie, it is that knowledge"

"concerning God, which may be obtained by the contemplation of his creatures" (92).

For Bacon, humans fell because of their "proud knowledge of good and evil," which is their desire to construct laws to control others (6).²¹ Furthermore, authors, such as Pico

and Bacon, illustrate that mankind can regain his god-like status that he had before the fall. For instance, in *Advancement*, *Novum*, and *New Atlantis*, Bacon outlines the

Hermetic belief that "you...[must] make yourself equal to God" in order to "apprehend God" (*CH XII*, 90). The *Hermetica* reveals that it is by obtaining this knowledge that

individuals come to know themselves and God and to know themselves as god, their

fulfillment as Sons of God. Ficino's statement, "the aim of our soul's whole endeavor is to become God. Such an endeavor is no less natural to men than the effort to fly to birds"

²⁰ See Appendix I for full *Tablet* text.

²¹ Furthermore, Bacon illustrates in his essay "Of Goodness" that it was not the desire to gain knowledge that caused mankind's fall but rather the "excess" desire for "excess" knowledge: "the desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall; but in charity there is no excess" (280).

(220-1),²² illustrates the Hermetic teaching that all individuals have the capacity to become Sons of God because all beings have the Word of God within.²³

Defining “Son of God” and the “Word of God”

This definition of Son as the Logos, the Word of God, can be found in other Gnostic, Stoic, and later Neoplatonic texts through the influence of Philo.²⁴ In this mode of thinking, Jesus was the “Son of God” because he spoke and embodied the “Word of God”—he was the teacher of God’s wisdom. Certain Gnostic texts,²⁵ especially the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of James*,²⁶ and the *Poimandres*²⁷ of the *Corpus*

²² See Ficino’s *Theologia Platonica*, Book 14 chapter 1.

²³ See CH I: “The Light...even Mind, the first God, who was before the watery substance which appeared out of the darkness; and the Word which came forth from the Light is Son of God”; “By looking at what you yourself have in you; for in you too, the Word is Son, and the Mind is Father of the word” (49).

²⁴ For instance in the Coptic Gnostic text *The Second Treatise (Discourse) of the Great Seth*, Christ reveals himself as the Son in the divine triad of Father: “perfect Greatness,” Mother: “Truth,” and Son: “Word.” (See Pearson, 240). Secondly, the Stoics conceived the Word as divine Reason governing the world. Stoics interpreted Hermes as the Word (See Buttrick volume 4, page 870), which becomes reflected in the manner in which Christians interpreted Jesus as the W in a paradigm of a teacher who preaches the purpose of life for mankind (See Luke 11:28). In this context, Hermes and Jesus may be seen as God’s agents in the establishment of a new creation, a mode of existence, which the manifestation of God’s Word is open to those who may learn. See Col. 1:25-27, in which Jesus states, “even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations but now is made manifest to his saints...which is Christ in you”—here Jesus relates that anyone *may* attain to the Word because everyone has “Christ” within them, a meaning similar to depiction of “Christ” as the archetypal, true man or the man truly made in God’s image (II Cor. 4:4). Thirdly, Philo talks about Logos as the first-born Son of God, the image or shadow of God, and even the ambassador of God. John 1:1 states “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Although we do not see a belief in the *Gospel of John* that anyone has the ability to learn the Word of God and thus be the Son of God, we can see clearly that the Jewish, Gnostic, and Christian traditions were drawing on common sources.

²⁵ Not all Gnostic sects promote that salvation is open to everyone. In fact, Thomasine Gnosticism, with its *Gospel of Thomas* and the apocryphal *Gospel of James* are the anomaly. For instance, Valentinian and Basilidian Gnosticism argue that only a selected few can attain to salvation. The Hermetic philosophy (regarded as Gnostic in that it is a branch of knowledge that the early Church Fathers were contending with in their efforts to promote Christianity as the true religion) bears more significance with the Renaissance occult mindset of the 16th and 17th centuries precisely because it espouses that salvation is *accessible* for everyone who works for it. It is in this framework that Renaissance authors such as Ficino would not classify the Hermetic texts as Gnostic per se (and thus heretical); for these philosophers, the Hermetic texts espouse a similar line of thinking to Platonic and early Christian thought.

²⁶ This is the apocryphal *Gospel of James* found in the Nag Hammadi collection of Gnostic tractates in 1945. This James is James the Less, so called by Mark to differentiate him from the apostles James, James the Greater—one of Jesus’ favorites along with Peter and John. James believed that Jesus was an example not our salvation. James the Less was part of the Essene group who became the head of the Christian movement of the Jerusalem community at Qumran.

Hermeticum, illustrate that *all* people have the capacity to be “Sons of God” if they obtain the “Word of God.” Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of James* and Hermes in the Hermetic texts are teachers who provide the message that can lead a person to know himself. Similarly, Peter Abelard, a Gnostic at heart, in 1130 CE also believes that Jesus was our example and not our salvation. He argued that Jesus had come to enlightenment and that others could too.

These Gnostic texts stand in direct opposition to the *traditional* reading of *John*, which sees that Jesus is the redeemer who prepares a place in heaven for those who believe in him.²⁸ In the Gnostic texts, Jesus is not humanity’s savior, for only individuals can save themselves. In other words, learning the Word in the Hermetic discourse refers to the process that the individual can attain to the knowledge of God in a process of individual discovery to gain knowledge of God, which differs from the Old Testament use of the Word as God’s law, a revelation that is being transmitted to the prophets. In the New Testament, however, the view that individuals can attain to the Son of God title is subtly woven throughout the books of John, Matthew, Luke, Corinthians, and Romans.²⁹ For instance, Romans 8:16 reveals that human beings may regain their status

²⁷ *Poimandres* is *Libellus* I, the first tractate in the *Corpus*. In this tractate, Poimandres, the Mind of the Sovereignty, teaches Hermes Trismegistus about creation and mankind’s place within it. This depiction of creation is mirrored in Genesis. The teaching was given to Hermes by revelation while he was in a trance or hypnosis state. Yet the other tractates in the *Corpus* and the *Asclepius* are teachings from Hermes to either his son Tat or to the initiate Asclepius. In these tractates, Hermes serves as a guide who helps Tat and Asclepius reach their own experience with the divine. In this way, the *Hermetica* teaches individuals that they may obtain knowledge of God not via revelation but via individual investigation of nature, the self, and God.

²⁸ John 14:2-3 states that Jesus is “going there [the kingdom of God] to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” Acts 4:12 states that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus “for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

²⁹ See I John 3:1-2, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God...now are we called Sons of God.” Luke 3:38, “Adam, the Son of God.” Matthew 9, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.” Philippians 2:2, 5: “make my

as Sons of God by being like-minded to Christ: “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” It is from passages like this one that Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton could have gleaned their progressive spiritual views that mankind can become god-like. Yet, as orthodox Christianity did not espouse this progressive view that all individuals can become a “Christ” and attain to their own salvation, it is useful to posit that it was the Hermetic philosophy with its straightforward teaching that helped to instigate and propel this view in the minds of Renaissance and Restoration authors. Thus, I contend that it is through the Hermetic texts that philosophers and literary authors were able to *decode* the meaning behind the New Testament’s parabolic teachings regarding mankind’s divinity.

God Within versus God Outside of Nature

In opposition to the New Testament, the Hermetic texts clearly outline the *process* by which individuals can attain to the status, with Christ, as Sons of God. In the Hermetic dialogue, the process by which human beings can learn the Word of God and thereby know themselves and God, involves studying nature. From the time of Parmenides and Heraclitus around 500 BCE, we can see Western thinkers engaged in the dialectic of God within versus God outside of nature.³⁰ From the 6th century onward, the notion of one God³¹ who was all seeing, all hearing and all knowing permeated the

joy complete by being like-minded [to Christ], having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose...your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

³⁰ It is interesting to note that Sir W. Flinders Petrie argued that the composition of the Hermetic writings were from 500 BCE to 200BCE, around the time that Heraclitus and Parmenides were engaged in ascertaining whether God was within or outside of nature. For the Hermetic texts argue that God is within all human beings and nature.

³¹ Ultimately, the origin of a single God in our written history begins in 1350 BC with Akhnaten (Amenhotep IV) who created a monotheism (or perhaps more literally a henotheism in which the One God –the Son god Aten, ranked at the top of other gods).

intellectual spheres of classical Greece.³² Heraclitus promotes that one God flowed through nature in a perpetual flux and that human beings are part of this flow. Although Heraclitus never articulates that human beings are “gods” because they are “part of God,” we can see the beginning stages of this line of thinking which began to fully take shape in the Egyptian Hermetic texts. In opposition to Heraclitus, Parmenides, though he agrees with the concept of one supreme God, argues that God and the other gods are outside and above nature. Here we can see where Plato receives his influence for his cosmology and theology in the *Timaeus*. In this text, objects in the universe are mere copies, separate from the real world of Forms. However, even though the world is a mere reflection of the “real,” Plato still maintains that it is humanity’s “job” in this physical existence to understand nature, simply because it is the model of the rational soul. Individuals can understand nature by emulating the order, revolutions, and harmonies of the manifested Mind in the universe. This emulation will restore souls to their original state of excellence, a state lost in their embodiment in the physical.

The argument for whether God is within or outside of nature persisted throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages, the notion that God is outside and above nature was dominant. Similarly, during the Reformation, the belief that God is outside nature and thus unknowable was championed by Luther in Germany, Wycliff and Hus in Bohemia, and Calvin in Switzerland. Yet for a brief period in the Renaissance,³³

³² The many gods (both universal and individual) of Hesiodic and Orphic cosmogonies continued to exist for purposes of ritual or art from the 6th century onward.

³³ I say a “brief period in the Renaissance” because the heyday of translations of the Hermetic texts spans from 1463-1593. Yet many writers in the Restoration were engaged with the Hermetic philosophy, such as Cudworth in England and Hanneman in Germany. (We should keep in mind that there was an English translation of the *Corpus* as late as 1650.) These authors opposed the Protestant Puritan and Mechanistic belief that God was outside of nature. Thus, I contend that authors such as Milton, Cudworth, and More were invested in keeping the Renaissance Hermetic mentality alive in the face of opposing scientific and religious epistemologies in the Restoration.

the dialectic of God within nature and thus a knowable God became the central focus for many philosophers and writers, which helped to pave the way for the rise of the New Science. Although Plato diverges from Socrates' teachings to argue in *Timaeus* that mankind can learn about the real Forms by studying the forms in nature, it is not until Hermes Trismegistus' teachings are finally written down in the 1st century BCE that the philosophical-theological argument, for individuals to study nature in order to begin the process of regaining their god-like natures, becomes prominent.

The Hermetic Tradition in Scholarship

In the philosophy and history disciplines, Hermes Trismegistus is a well-documented figure that originated in the Egyptian myths of Thoth. Yet in the literary discipline, there has not been sufficient documentation for locating the influence of the Hermetic tradition on scholars and literary authors throughout the ages. Starting with historian Lynn Thorndike, who sets the context for Eugenio Garin, Allen G. Debus, D. P. Walker, and Frances Yates, Hermetism and other systems of esoteric knowledge in Renaissance Neoplatonists has received attention.³⁴ Although these authors make the case that Hermetic teachings greatly influenced Renaissance and Restoration thinkers,

³⁴ Thorndike, Debus, Walker, Yates are all historians. Lynn Thorndike in *History of Magic and Experimental Science* in 8 volumes (1958) discusses medieval science and alchemy from the classical age to 18th century. D. P. Walker in *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (1958) argues that magic was a major creation of the late 15th and early 16th centuries rather than a marginal subject as argued by earlier scholars. Allen G. Debus in *Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (1977) argues that alchemy and the occult were the major sources of inspiration for the scientific movement. He illustrates that Harvey, Donne, Jonson, and Burton show acquaintance with the ideas of Paracelsus. Frances Yates is perhaps the most important of these historians as she wrote extensively on the occult and Neoplatonic philosophies in the Renaissance. She was the first scholar to discuss Renaissance Hermetism as a major influence in the Renaissance in *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964), *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (1979), and *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (1972). The Yates Paradigm or Yates Thesis, that there was a unitary esoteric tradition that gave birth to the scientific mentality, dominated the 1970s but fell out of favor in the 1980s. Modern scholar Brian Vickers argues that Yates conducted loose readings of texts and did not provide substantial evidence for her claims, specifically that the Rosicrucian texts prove that there was a coherent occult strain in European culture. Lastly, Eugenio Garin in *Astrology in the Renaissance: The Zodiac of Life* (1983) traces the role of astrology in the 15th and 16th centuries.

they do not trace in the literature of the time specific literary maneuvers that illustrate the major philosophical-theological tenet of thought in the Hermetic texts, which I am designating to the trope of self-mastery. Before I trace the Hermetic rhetoric and metaphors in the works of Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton, it is important to outline the history of the Hermetic tradition and underscore the major tenets that later captivated many authors of the Renaissance and Restoration.

A History of the Hermetic Tradition: From the Ancient World to the Early Modern

In 1460, Leonardo da Pistoia presented Cosimo de' Medici with the Greek manuscript found in Macedonia which became known as the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Cosimo had Ficino stop his translations of Plato to translate the more important texts of Hermes Trismegistus. Who was this Hermes Trismegistus? To answer this we have to trace the figure of the man Hermes to the god Hermes from antiquity to the Renaissance Neoplatonists. According to tradition, Hermes lived in Egypt in the time of King Ammon.³⁵ In this view, he was a man who attained gnosis, knowledge of God, and passed on his wisdom.³⁶ After his death, he became a god, the notorious figure Thoth.³⁷ From the time of Herodotus (5th century BCE), it was customary to translate the Egyptian Thoth by the name of the Greek Hermes, the messenger of the gods and psychopomp (teacher/guide). His Roman equivalent is Mercury (Mercurius). After the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, the Greeks in Egypt adopted the outward forms of the Egyptian culture, investing them with their own Greek content. During the

³⁵ Ammon, often spelled Amon, is equated with the Greek Zeus, while the Greek Asclepius (initiate into the divine knowledge that Hermes teaches) is the Egyptian Imhotep. And as already stated, the Greek Hermes was originally the Egyptian Thoth.

³⁶ See Introduction to Scott, 37.

³⁷ The God Thoth (sometimes Thouth or Tahuti) was worshipped in his principal cult location Chmun (or City of the Eight) also called in Greek, Hermopolis. Stephan A. Hoeller states that there is evidence that Thoth was worship at this location as early as 3,000 BCE (4).

2nd century, the Egyptians added the epithet “thrice great,” *Trismegistos* (Greek) and *Trismegistus* (Latin) to distinguish between the Egyptian and the Greek Hermes.³⁸

The Egyptian god Thoth dates from the Old Kingdom around 3700-2150 BCE. He was represented anthropomorphically but with a head of an ibis. According to myth, he was the inventor of writing and mathematics. Besides being the inventor of technology, he instituted the basic mediums of Egyptian kingship and culture. For the Greeks, starting with Homer,³⁹ Hermes was the messenger of the gods—the god of fertility, herds, and pastures and the patron of commerce and trade. Both Thoth and Hermes were believed to conduct the souls of the dead to the netherworld—thus he was the deity who crossed the border between men and gods, between this world and the next. The Greek Hermes was also endowed with magic: using his Hades’ Helmet to conceal him and giving Odysseus an enchanted plant to use against the power of Circe. Syncellus recounted that Manetho, an Egyptian priest of the 3rd century BCE, distinguished between two figures of Hermes: the first wrote his wisdom in hieroglyphs on stelae⁴⁰ and the second Hermes, the son of Agathodaimon and father of Tat, after the Flood⁴¹ deposited

³⁸ The use of this epithet is attested in a Demotic (a later form of the Egyptian language) ostrakon (broken piece of pottery) from the 2nd century BCE. See Pearson, 275 and Copenhagen, xiv. The *Rutledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* explains that Thoth’s epithet, “Thoth the great, the great, the great,” was found at the temple of Esna. Fowden asserts that the earliest occurrence of the name was in the Athenagora by Philo of Byblos (64-141CE). See Fowden, 213.

³⁹ In Homer’s *Hymn to Hermes*, Hermes is depicted as a playful newborn who created the lyre out of tortoise shells. Because Hermes played so well, Apollo gave Hermes the offices of guiding souls and keeper of the herds. Later Euripides in his prologue to *Ion*, has Hermes introduce himself as grandson to Atlas, son to Zeus and Maia, and servant of the immortals. Hoeller states that “it is tempting to interpret this as saying from worldly toil (Atlas), with a heavy infusion of divine inspiration, comes forth conscious, as symbolized by Hermes” (2).

⁴⁰ Manetho’s account bears connection to the origin of the word Hermes, which relates to a stone pillar used to communicate with the deities. The use of names beginning with “Herm” in Greece dates from at least 600 BCE. The God Hermes is a generic term used by the pre-classical Greeks for any deity. Hermes was later associated with the God of Knowledge in Athens in the 1st or 2nd century CE.

⁴¹ Copenhagen states that Syncellus’ mention of the flood allowed Christians to fit Hermetic ancient theology into their own doxographies and genealogies (xvi).

this wisdom in temples in the form of books written in Greek.⁴² Cicero in *On the Nature of the Gods* states that there were five gods called Hermes, the last of whom was Hermes Trismegistus of the Hermetic texts. These various accounts of the man versus the god Hermes illustrate that even though there was and still is mystery surrounding this figure in history, authors could not deny his existence nor his ideas and accomplishments.

The Greeks regarded Egypt as the repository of most ancient knowledge. Philosophers journeyed to Egypt for initiation into this ancient knowledge in Sais, Egypt. Herodotus (484–425 BCE) and Isocrates (436–338 BCE) report that Solon and Pythagoras had received teachings in Egypt, and Diodorus (60–30 BCE) in his *Historical Library* records a series of Greek heroes who traveled to Egypt to partake of the customs and teachings, which they introduced into Greece. As can be gleaned from his *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch (46–120 CE) visited Egypt and documented their philosophical-theological knowledge. Clement (150–213 CE) in his *Stromata* counted 36 Hermetic writings in circulation during his time, which he claimed contained the entire philosophy of the Egyptians.⁴³ Iamblichus (245–325 CE) in *On the Mysteries* states that Egyptian theology was synonymous with Hermetism, giving us a picture that late classical antiquity viewed Hermes as the philosophical teacher of Egyptian theology. According to Solon (638–558 BCE), in Plato’s *Critias*, the priesthood of Sais had ancient books written by the god Thoth and thus Egyptian priests supposedly instructed Democritus, Plato, and Pythagoras in the knowledge of Hermes.⁴⁴ From this short list of late classical

⁴² Flavius Josephus in *Jewish Antiquities* 1.71 records that ancient wisdom was set down on tablets of clay and stone—the clay to survive the coming devastation of the world by fire and the stone to escape destruction by a future deluge. Josephus states that the inscriptions were engraved by the family of Seth, son of Adam. See Scarborough, 23.

⁴³ This is a modest number compared to Manetho’s count of 36,525 and Seleucus’ count of 20,000. See Saunron or Ebeling, 9.

⁴⁴ See Ebeling, 6.

authors and early Church Fathers, we can clearly see that the most important ancient wisdom of God, the universe, and mankind was purported to have originated from Thoth/Hermes. Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-40 CE)⁴⁵ in his biography even stresses that Moses was initiated in Egyptian philosophy during his upbringing as a prince in the Pharaoh's court; along these lines of thinking, Moses learned the philosophical-theological teachings of the Thoth/Hermes figure.⁴⁶

For Philo, Moses was the teacher of Pythagoras and thus Greek philosophy was the natural development of the teachings of Moses, which first were derived from the teachings of the Egyptian Thoth/Hermes.⁴⁷ We can see that in late classical antiquity, Hermetism was considered an Egyptian religion, which influenced both the Greek and Hebrew modes of thinking; and for the early Christian world, in such writings as Augustine's *City of God*, Hermes was an Egyptian who taught philosophy in Egypt long before the Greek philosophers. Consequently, throughout the Middle Ages, the idea that Hermes Trismegistus was a contemporary and perhaps teacher of Moses was prevalent.⁴⁸ The first medieval Jewish reference⁴⁹ to Hermes in Europe is found in Moses ibn Ezra's 12th-century *Treatise of the Garden*, which includes a passage from the *Stobaeus*

⁴⁵ Philo was a Hellenized Jew who sought to bridge Greek "scientific" or rational philosophy with the mythical ideology of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jerome (345-420 CE) lists him as an early Church father. The Church preserved the Philonic writings because Eusebius of Caesarea labeled the group, described in Philo's *The Contemplative Life*, as Christians.

⁴⁶ See Acts 7:22, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."

⁴⁷ According to Aristobulus of Paneas in the 1st half of the 2nd century BCE, Homer and Hesiod drew from the books of Moses, which were translated into Greek long before the Septuagint.

⁴⁸ It is important to understand that even though Augustine argued against most of the Gnostic groups because they were the potential traditions that stood in the way of Christianity, he first belonged to the Gnostic Manichaean group; see Augustine's own account in *Confessions*.

⁴⁹ In medieval England, the *Book of Hermes on the Six Principles of Nature* 12th century was in circulation and the *Book of Twenty Four Philosophers* was a favorite of Alexander of Hales, Thomas Aquinas, Bartholomew of England, and Albertus Magus. See Copenhaver's *Hermetica*, xlvii.

excerpts.⁵⁰ This text mentions Hermes and Asclepius⁵¹ as two philosophers who obtained union with the Active Intellect or the All.⁵²

In the Renaissance, Neoplatonists highlighted Hermes' teachings as fundamentally important to understand in conjunction with Christ's teachings. In this paradigm, they argued that Christianity and other ancient wisdom were in harmony regarding their main theological teachings. Francesco Patrizi argued that both Moses and Plato received their teachings from Hermes⁵³ while Ficino insisted that the cosmology of *Poimandres* and *Genesis* really did not differ in their actual message. In this vein, Pico argued in his *Conclusions* that there was essential agreement among Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, the Judeo-Christian tradition interpreted by Aquinas, and the esoteric traditions of Cabala, Hermetism, and Arab philosophy.⁵⁴ Bruno was the most radical of the Renaissance occult philosophers, arguing for a return to a pre-Judaic and pre-Christian Egyptian philosophy.⁵⁵ What this illustrates is that during the Renaissance, as in Hellenistic Egypt, a syncretistic or morphological action was taking place, where old teachings were revitalized and mingled with new traditions. But furthermore what this action illustrates is that during the Renaissance, authors were trying to justify their new

⁵⁰ The *Stobaeus* fragments are named after the 5th century John Stobaeus who compiled an anthology for the education of his son. These fragments comprise one of the four Hermetic texts that have survived through the ages.

⁵¹ We should remember that Asclepius is Hermes' student in the *Asclepius* text.

⁵² According to Moshe Idel, one of the most important successors of the ibn Ezra tradition was Yohanan Alemanno, one of Pico della Mirandola's Jewish teachers, who viewed Moses as a Hermetic magician. See Idel, 67.

⁵³ Augustine in *City of God* states that Hermes was the great-grandson of a contemporary of Moses. But during the Renaissance, many philosophers such as Foix de Candale and Giordano Bruno argued that Hermes was older than Moses. Additionally, Francois de Foix asserts that the Hermetic texts were written by the inventor of hieroglyphics who was more ancient than Moses and even Abraham and regrets that they are not mentioned in the scriptural canon. Furthermore, Symphorien Champier claims that Moses learned the wisdom stated in Genesis from Hermes. See Walker, 21 & 69.

⁵⁴ See Ebeling, 65.

⁵⁵ Bruno's ideas were so contentious that he was burned at the stake as a dangerous heretic on the Camp de' Fiori in Rome 1600.

religious thinking by arguing that the philosophical ideas of the past espoused the same message as Christianity regarding the nature of God and mankind, and thus should be included into one syncretistic religion. Ficino's translations of the two Hermetic texts *Corpus* and the *Asclepius* were used by Pico, Lull, and Bruno, who regarded Hermes on the same level of importance as Moses, venerating Hermes's writings as one would the Bible. For these philosophers, the Hermetic philosophy provided an alternative outlet for religious reinterpretation and the justification for studying such occult philosophical practices as astrology and alchemy.

This process of justifying ancient knowledge in light of current tradition is not unique to the Renaissance. In the early Church Fathers' interpretation, Christianity was not a radically new religion. Many of these Church Fathers attempted to pacify the attacks against the pagan religions (such attacks by Ireneas in the 2nd century CE in "Against Heresies") by showing that the major tenets of Christian thought were mirrored in earlier pagan writings. Both Clement and Lactantius (240-320 CE) state that Hermetic and Greek philosophers anticipated Christianity.⁵⁶ Hermes became the pre-Christian advocate of the basic beliefs of Christianity; Eusebius (263-339 CE) considered Hermes to be the harbinger of Christ and Hermes is similarly depicted as Christ's precursor in the Quodvultdeus translation of the Greek *Asclepius* into Latin.⁵⁷ For certain early Church Fathers such as Clement and his student Origen, philosophy was the path that led one to

⁵⁶ I should stress here that even though Clement attempted to marry Greek and Christian ideas, his objective for doing so was to give credence and predominance to Christianity—to show that Christianity was the true gnosis, that it was the fulfillment of earlier pagan gnosis. During his time, Gnosticism was the main rival of Christianity.

⁵⁷ Lactantius handed down portions of the original Greek *Asclepius*, which Quodvultdeus, bishop of Carthage, translated into Latin in 437-439. Quodvultdeus tried to show that Hermes was a leading pagan champion of the Trinity. Ebeling states that well into the 20th century, Quodvultdeus' tract was mistaken to be one of Augustine's work and thus Augustine could be called on to either condemn Hermes in connection with pagan idolatry as in *City of God* or to laud him as the harbinger of Christ as in the Quodvultdeus' translation of the *Asclepius*.

theology; thus the Hermetic and Platonic texts paved the way for Christian understanding.⁵⁸ 1,400 years later, Renaissance Neoplatonists, such as Ficino, Pico, Agrippa, and Bruno, reintroduced the same argument, calling for the inclusion of Hermetic and Platonic philosophy in Christian practices.

In a similar contentious dialectic to that of Ignatius and Ireneas on one side, arguing for theology not philosophy, and Clement and Origen on the other side, arguing for philosophy to be part of the process that led to theology, Renaissance esoteric philosophers battled against orthodox religious men, following the influence from Luther and Calvin, who argued for the removal of philosophy for the primacy of theology (just biblical evidence) simply because philosophy pulled individuals away from believing that they could only be redeemed through Jesus the Christ. Philosophy in their view corrupted individuals and turned them into atheists. It is this protestant Puritan fear (that philosophy leads to atheism) that Bacon was responding to in his essay “Of Atheism”: “It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man’s mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s minds about to religion” (290). For Luther, Adam’s sin was rooted in his desire to gain knowledge of God and to be like God and it was the study of philosophy that led mankind down this path. Yet, for the Hermeticists,⁵⁹ philosophy was the beginning stages on the path to self-discovery, which was the beginning stages on the path to know God—a process that was mankind’s right and responsibility.

⁵⁸ The early Church Fathers thought the ancient texts, *Hermetica*, *Orphica*, Sibylline Prophecies, Pythagorean *Carmina Aurea*, were vestiges of true religion because they taught monotheism, the Trinity, and the creation of the world out of the Word.

⁵⁹ “Hermeticists” is used by modern scholars whereas “Hermetists” is used by Renaissance philosophers such as Heinrich Noll in *Hermetical Physick*.

Before I outline the major tenets of the Hermetic belief, it is advantageous to trace Renaissance and Restoration authors' perception of the Hermetic texts. When were the Hermetic texts written? Beginning with Ficino's 1463 translation of the *Corpus*, under the title *Pimander*,⁶⁰ Renaissance readers believed these tractates espoused pre-Christian wisdom. Yet in 1614, Isaac Casaubon, encouraged by James I, discredited the antiquity of the *Hermetica* in his *De rebus XVI* in which he attacked Cesare Baronio's discussion of the so-called pagan prophets who foresaw the coming of Christ, namely Hermes. Casaubon argued that the Hermetic texts did not record ancient Egyptian wisdom but rather they were forgeries⁶¹ that echoed Plato's *Timaeus*, *Genesis*, and the *Gospel of John*.⁶² Since some of the tractates made mention of later Greek authors such as Phidias and used later Greek vocabulary, Casaubon argued that the texts were written around 200-300 CE⁶³ by pagan writers responding to the challenges of Judaism and Christianity.⁶⁴ Casaubon's claim that there was no doubt a real figure Hermes, but that he could not be the writer of the works ascribed to him, echoes Iamblichus' argument in *On the Mysteries* that books in circulation that bore Hermes' name were not written by him. Yet Iamblichus maintains that Hermes did write texts in Egyptian but that the

⁶⁰ Ficino's *Pimander*, printed in 1471, stopped with CH tractate XIV, missing the last 3 tractates.

⁶¹ Prior to Casaubon's dating in 1614, Gilbert Genebrard (1567) and Calvinist Matthieu Berodale (1575) suggested that the *Corpus* writings were forged and perhaps dated to the 4th century when the Egyptians had first learned the Greek language with the Hellenization of Egypt. Casaubon's dating, because it was commissioned and supported by James I, was the most well known.

⁶² There are many similarities between the *Gospel of John* and the Hermetic teachings, namely that since God is within everyone, so too is Christ within everyone and thus all individuals may be like Christ if they embody God's Word; in becoming God's Word, then individuals may become Sons of God. Although the Hermetic texts to include a discussion of Jesus the Christ, they do illustrate that all people have the ability to know God by living according to his Word that is within. For New Testament passages see: John 17:21, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you"; John 14:6-7, "I am the way and the truth and the light. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well." See also I Corinthians 2:16; "we have the mind of Christ."

⁶³ We must keep in mind that Casaubon is not reflecting upon Plutarch and Tertullian's mention of Hermes Trismegistus in the first century CE.

⁶⁴ See page 400 of Yates' *Giordano Bruno* for a further discussion of Casaubon's attack.

existing Hermetic texts were translations from the Egyptian by Greek speaking philosophers; thus the texts were Egyptian Hermetic doctrines⁶⁵ in origin but Greek philosophy in form.⁶⁶

Renaissance Authors' Endorsements of the Hermetic Mode of Thinking Before Casaubon

Before Casaubon's dating of the Hermetic texts, many authors endorsed the Hermetic philosophical-theological tradition. In Italy, Ficino published his Latin version of the *Corpus* in 1471 and promoted in his *Theologia Platonica* the Hermetic tenet that "man is a terrestrial God." Agrippa (1486-1535) in Germany advocated for the recovery of a pristine Christianity, which for him was closely tied to the Cabala and the institution of the Hermetic religion to replace Christianity. Agrippa embraced the Hermetic view on astrology because it maintained that mankind's fate was not determined by the stars. In a similar vein to Agrippa, Italian Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639) attempted to establish a Hermetic City of the Sun in Spain and France, believing like Agrippa that he had a messianic role in bringing in a new age of spiritual truth. German Sebastian Franck (1499-1543), although he was not a Hermeticist, was an advocate of the Hermetic tradition. He illustrated that every nation had its prophets: Moses taught the Hebrews, Plato taught the Greeks, and Hermes taught the Egyptians.

Frenchman Philippe de Mornay (1549-1623) was an advocate of Christianity but he also favored Hermes' texts, arguing in *Treatise on the Truth* 1581⁶⁷ that Hermes had already taught that God's creation was performed by means of Logos and the this Logos/Word was synonymous with his Son. Mornay's argument that the Word was

⁶⁵ Legend states that Thoth/Hermes wrote all the ancient texts, including esoteric ones like *The Book of Breathings*, which taught humans how to become gods.

⁶⁶ See Iamblichus' *On the Mysteries* book 8 chapter 4, page 8.

⁶⁷ Mornay tried to prove that the sciences originated with Hermes and Moses.

synonymous with the Son in the Hermetic texts became one of the central tenets that later authors would draw upon in their epistemological arguments for a philosophical-theological system of knowledge.⁶⁸ In France, the humanist Jacques Lefevre d' Etaples (1450-1536), oddly enough Calvin's teacher, admired the Hermetic texts and wrote a brief commentary on each chapter. Back in Italy, Cardinal Francesco Patrizi's translation appeared in 1591 where he argued that the Hermetic writings, not Aristotelian ones, were the basis of Christian education to be taught in schools and monasteries. Lodovico Lazzarelli wrote his own Christian version of the Hermetic philosophy called the *Crater Hermetis*; this shows evidence that the *Hermetica* was already fashionable in Europe. In 1610 German Joachim Tancke in "On the Dignity and Use of Alchemy" endorses the belief that Hermes was the earliest philosopher who described the art of alchemy. It was unusual for professors to endorse or promote such esoteric traditions as the Hermetic tradition, but Tanacke, a professor at Leipzig University, wanted alchemy to become a learned study. In a similar vein, Englishman John Webster⁶⁹ in *Academiarum Examen* 1654 argues that the philosophy of Hermes revived by the Paracelsian school should be

⁶⁸ Ficino was the first to connect the logos in John's Gospel with the logos in *Poimandres*, the first text in the *Corpus*. The Word/Son paradigm in the Hermetic discourse is present in early Christian and Gnostic arenas. Since everyone has a "Christ" being within, read "Christ" here as God's pure image (II Cor 4:4), they have the potential to learn God's Word and become Sons of God. In this Word/Son paradigm, both Hermes and Jesus should be seen as "teachers" (Luke 5:1) or "ministers" (Col 1:25) who have attained to knowledge of God, and "redeemers" only in the sense that they teach God's message (God's agents in redemption/new creation Col 1:15) and not in the sense that individuals *need* them to be saved. Everyone can a Son of God, but only a few have embodied the Son image of God. See CH I: "for in you too, the Word is Son" which illustrates that all individuals have the capacity to know the Word of God and thus be properly called Sons of God and Matt.16:16, "Christ, son of the living God" which illustrates that Jesus obtained the knowledge of God because he embodied God's Word; he was a walking image of God. Whereas medieval and early modern reading of John 1:1 reserves the "Son" title for Jesus the Christ, the Hermetic texts explain that all human beings have the ability to become "Son" just as Jesus the Christ had done by *learning* and *becoming* the Word of God.

⁶⁹ This John Webster (1610-1682), not to be confused with the playwright, is a Paracelsian chemist who rejected the Aristotelian scholasticism of education at Oxford, contending that an education in the allegories of Plato and Hermes was better suited to revealing the mysteries of God's creation.

taught in universities. German Christoph Balduff,⁷⁰ who saw Hermes as the founder of alchemy, wanted to ignore Plato and Plotinus to instead endorse the Paracelsian branch of alchemy to which he claimed Paracelsians took their cues from Hermes and Zosimus, the first alchemists.⁷¹

Renaissance Authors' Endorsements after Casaubon's Dating of the Hermetic Texts

Renaissance and Restoration authors even directly after Casaubon's dating believed that Hermes was the original writer of the Hermetic texts and that the *Tablet* was one of Hermes Trismegistus' texts along with the *Corpus* and the *Asclepius*.⁷² For instance, Cambridge graduate Heinrich Noll reveals: "I call my science 'Hermetic' not only because it...conveys the thought of Hermes, but because it proceeds according to a secret method of philosophizing whose beginnings, at least, we have in the fragments of

⁷⁰ Ebeling argues that there were two separate Hermetic camps in the Renaissance, those who prized the *Corpus*, such as Ficino and other Platonists groups of the period, and those who prized the *Tablet*, followers of alchemy and Paracelsian natural philosophy. Here we can see that Christoph Balduff falls into the latter camp, endorsing the *Tablet's* teaching of alchemy.

⁷¹ Zosimus of Panopolis 350-420 CE is the earliest author of alchemical texts that scholars can identify. However, Copenhaver cites that before the Christian era but after the writings of Bolos Democritus of Mendes (5th century BCE), a number of alchemical treatises began to appear under the name of Hermes (See Scott, xxxiv). Zosimus portrayed both technical and spiritual sides of alchemy; yet he emphasized spiritual alchemy because Hermes illustrated that individuals who know their own power do not use magic. However, alchemy most likely flourished in first century Hellenistic Egypt with a morphology of numerous ideas: Aristotelian, and Stoic doctrines regarding the elements and matter, Babylonian astrology, and Egyptian rebirth mythology of Osiris. According to Ebeling, the oldest collections of chemical formulas are preserved in a papyrus found at a tomb in Thebes, dating from the 3rd or 4th century. These papyri include instructions on how to replicate silver and use code names to designate the utensils needed for the experiment (25). According to Leo Stavenhagen, the first alchemical work to appear in the West is a treatise attributed to Hermes. This attribution derives from Robertus Castrenis, who translated the text from Arabic into Latin in 1182. It was later published in Paris in 1559, under the title *Booklet of Morienus Romanus, of Old the Hermit of Jerusalem, on the Transfiguration of the Metals and the While of the Ancient Philosophers' Occult Arts, Never before Published*. See *Testament of Alchemy*.

⁷² According to Robin Raybould, Prince Jazid of Alexandria (635-704 CE) in the *Paradise of Wisdom* cites that Hermes is the original author of the *Tablet*. And we have comments made by Zosimus of Panopolis (350-420 CE) earlier than Jazid contending that Hermes was the originator of alchemical, specifically spiritual alchemy. In the 16th century, alchemist Nicolas Guibert (1547-1620) maintained that the *Tablet* had to be inauthentic, not stemming from Hermes, because the ancients had not mentioned alchemy by name: in the *Tablet*, gold and silver were designated by the names of planets which were not introduced until Proclus' commentary on *Timaeus* around 460 CE. The Greek original of the *Asclepius* dates to 270 CE while the Latin version dates to 437 CE with Quodvultdeus, Bishop of Carthage's translation. The *Asclepius* was known throughout the Middle Ages and Ficino's Latin translation was printed in 1469.

the Egyptian Hermes, namely, in his *Tabula Smaragdina*” (3). Isaac Newton translated the *Tablet* in 1680. His Hermetic alchemical pursuit lasted for over 20 years, as he was interested in what alchemy could teach him about forms and changes about the universal spirit that animated the world. In the literary world,⁷³ Englishman Thomas Browne in *Religio Medici* (1643) states that the “severe schools shall never laugh me out of the philosophy of Hermes” (26).⁷⁴ Additionally, Milton refers to Hermes in “Il Penseroso” as the “thrice great Hermes” with whom the persona would like to ponder the workings of the stars, “I may oft outwatch the Bear / With thrice great Hermes” (line 87-8).

Although many authors refrained from publicly advocating Hermetic Christianity after the Casaubon controversy, some still included the Hermetic tradition in their competing claims about how best to communicate truth. For instance, as Richard Marback illustrates, Englishman John Webster (1610-1682) contended that the allegories of Plato and Hermes were better suited to revealing the mysteries of God’s creation than Aristotelian scholasticism.⁷⁵ Similarly, German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (considered the founder of Egyptology) in his *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1652-54) attempted to keep the Hermetic tradition alive by integrating lists of Hermetic texts in order to establish that Egypt was the incubus for Christian ideas. In this text, 40 years after Casaubon discredited the Hermetic tradition, Kircher argued that ancient Egyptian was the language spoken by Adam and Eve, that Hermes Trismegistus *was* Moses, and that the hieroglyphs were occult symbols, which could not be translated but rather expressed in marks, characters, or figures. Additionally, Englishman Rudolph Cudworth in *System of the*

⁷³ Additionally, Burton mentions Hermes no less than thirteen times in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* first printed in 1621 with seven more editions until 1676.

⁷⁴ Additionally, Browne states: the “allegorical description of Hermes pleaseth me beyond all the metaphysical definitions of divines” (22).

⁷⁵ See Marback, 79.

Universe firmly defended the *Corpus* as late as 1678 in his attempt to refute atheism and Cartesian mechanistic ideas that were championed by Thomas Hobbes.⁷⁶

Contemporary Dating of the Hermetic Texts

Gnostic scholar Birger Pearson recounts the prevailing theory that the Hermetic and other Gnostic texts belong to the early 3rd century BCE when a great deal of social and cultural ferment and movement of groups helped to create new varieties of their ancient cultures in their new homelands.⁷⁷ In the accepted modern view is that ancient Platonism and ancient Judaism provided the ancient Gnostic teachers and writers with “the ingredients they used in creating a religion of salvation based on gnosis.”⁷⁸ Yet, the Nag Hammadi discovery in 1945 of Gnostic texts provided valuable evidence for illustrating the origins of these Gnostic texts to Jewish sources. All of the Nag Hammadi texts are Coptic—they are all Egyptian translations of writings originally composed in Greek in Alexandria during the 1st century CE when Alexandria was the nexus for Egyptian, Greek, and Jewish thinking. Up until this discovery, the only textual evidence we had for many of the Gnostic texts were from early Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Clement, Lacantius, and Eusebius.

Pearson argues that the Hermetic texts reveal Jewish influence⁷⁹ and claims that the text of *Poimandres* at the beginning of the *Corpus* must have been written before the annihilation of the Alexandrian Jewish community that took place as a result of the

⁷⁶ In *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that everything in the world, including human perceptions and passions could be explained by motion and atoms and thus God no longer becomes the focus.

⁷⁷ Andre-Jean Festugiere, a historian of philosophy, considers the Hermetic texts to be mainly Greek in origin—a Hellenistic amalgam of Platonism, Stoicism, Judaism, and Christianity, set in a Gnostic framework. Yet, Copenhaver argues that Festugiere was wrong to dismiss Egyptian elements in the Greek and Latin treatises as mere ornamentation (xlv).

⁷⁸ See Pearson, 2.

⁷⁹ Hoeller claims that Jewish elements in the Hermetic writings are not very pronounced: the Hermes of the Hermetic texts “is primarily Egyptian, to a lesser degree Greek, and to a very slight extent Jewish in character” (4).

Jewish revolt against the Roman emperor Trajan in 115-117 CE. Therefore, in his proposed timeframe, the *Poimandres* tractates were composed in the late 1st century and early 2nd century.⁸⁰ Many modern scholars would agree that the Hermetic texts were actually written down sometime around the 1st and 2nd centuries CE because this was a time of spiritual turmoil and syncretism in Alexandria, which became the religious and philological melting pot of the western world. The only proof we have for the Greek *Hermetica* as stemming from ancient Egyptian doctrine of Hermes is from late classical authors and early Church Fathers. Yet for many Renaissance thinkers before and even after Casaubon's dating, the Hermetic texts more accurately would be thought of as Platonic and Judaic-spiced Egyptianism rather than the common, current scholastic view as Egyptian and Platonic-spiced Judaism or simply Egyptian-spiced Platonism.⁸¹

The Philosophical-Theological Tenets of Hermetism: Becoming a Son of God

I have traced five major tenets of thought in the Hermetic teachings. All five points are interconnected, for each philosophical element depends on the one before to create a unified understanding of Hermetism. The first argument within the Hermetic texts illustrates that God is in nature.⁸² The second tenet reveals that human beings are a reflection of God just as the stars and trees reflect the image of God.⁸³ Third, because

⁸⁰ See Pearson for a detailed account of the evidence for the Jewish influence on Hermetic texts, which include similarities in worship and offering of thanksgiving and praise to God. He concludes that the writer of the *Poimandres* was "at home with the worship life of Jewish synagogue" but was clearly "a disciple of Hermes Trismegistus" (280).

⁸¹ Jean-Pierre Mahe argues that the sentence structure in the Hermetic texts reflect elements in ancient Egyptian wisdom literature, especially the genre called "Instructions" from the Old Kingdom. In this way, Mahe attempted to re-establish an Egyptian ancestry for the Hermetic texts. Contemporary effort to reassert an Egyptian ancestry began in 1949 with Bruno Stricker's report. (See Copenhagen, Ivii).

⁸² As stated earlier, we see this dialect of God within versus God outside of nature in the discussion of Heraclitus and Parmenides. Later Neoplatonists such as Iamblichus in *Egyptian Mysteries* also argues that God manifests himself in the images of nature and thereby becomes tangible to sensuous mankind.

⁸³ This is most prominently seen in the *Asc I*, "all things are one, and the One is all things, seeing that all things were in the Creator before he created them all. And rightly has it been said of him that he is all things; for all things are parts of him"; "Individuals are united to the whole" (116).

God is manifested in nature and because human beings are part of this image of God, humans have the ability to know God. The last two tenets express the process by which mankind can come to know God: the first step to knowing God is to know the self. How one goes about “knowing the self” is initiated by the study of nature (for as God is present in all things to us through our sense, individuals must learn about nature’s processes of motion and regeneration). The second step to knowing God is to participate in nature—participate in the act of creation, a microcosm act of the God’s Creation. In this way, the Hermetic texts teach a system of knowledge that unites religion and science, theology and philosophy. All of these steps lead mankind to the complete the last tenet espoused in the texts. Individuals can obtain their rightful nature *in this earthly existence* as mortal gods and become Sons of God.⁸⁴

The language of “Logos” and “Son of God” in the Hermetic texts resembles the language in the synoptic Gospels.⁸⁵ The only differences are that the Hermetic texts stress all humans have the ability to become Sons of God by learning the Word of God and that mankind’s self knowledge requires knowledge of nature because nature is the image of God to which mankind is connected. In other words, by knowing the self and

⁸⁴ Similarly, Neoplatonists believed that human perfection was attainable in this world without having to wait for the afterlife as taught by Christian Church doctrine. The difference between the Neoplatonic and the Hermetic texts in regards to perfection of the self resides in the Neoplatonic belief that this was achieved through philosophical contemplation and the Hermetic belief that this was achieved both through contemplation and physical application. Here we can see Hermetic influence on Bacon’s plan for a philosophical community to physically investigate nature as part of the process to gain knowledge about the self, nature, and God in *New Atlantis*. See my Bacon chapter for a greater discussion of his incorporation of the Hermetic philosophical theology.

⁸⁵ Compare John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”—here the “Word” is referring to Jesus; John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth”; and CH I, “the Word which came forth from the Light is son of God...By looking at what you yourself have in you; for in you too, the word is son, and the mind is father of the word...Now fix your thought upon the Light...and learn to know it” (48); and CH V, “It is only things which are brought into being that are present through sense; coming into being is nothing else than presentation through sense...He presents all things to us through our sense, and thereby manifests himself through all things...You can behold God’s image with your eyes, and lay hold on it with your hands” (64).

nature, one knows God and the self as god. Ultimately, what all five steps help mankind accomplish is the process of training the soul to begin a rebirth/regeneration toward becoming a self-determining being, a mortal god or “terrestrial god” in Ficino’s translation. This concept is also reflected in the Delphic maxim: gnothi s’ auton—know thyself.⁸⁶ Originally it meant, “know that you are mortal”; but from the 1st century BCE on, the meaning changed to “know yourself to be a god.” In Cicero’s “Dream of Scipio,” Scipio Africanus the Younger is counseled by his grandfather on how to conduct his life. The elder Scipio assures him that only his body is mortal: “your spirit is your true self, not that bodily form which can be pointed to with the finger. Know yourself, therefore, to be a god” (verse 26).

The Hermetic teaching in *Poimandres*⁸⁷ that “the Word is Son” and that anyone who obtains knowledge of God’s “Word” is his Son, is reflected in the use of “Son of God” in classical antiquity.⁸⁸ For instance, the Roman emperor Augustus was called “The Emperor Caesar, son of god, Augustus, ruler of all land and sea.” In the Old Testament, the leaders of people such as kings and princes who held authority from God were called Sons of God. In the New Testament, only Jesus was called the Son of God.⁸⁹ The synoptic gospel writers were attempting to advocate Jesus as the one and only true ruler by appropriating language already in use in the Greco-Roman world of the 1st

⁸⁶ “Know Thyself” is reported by Pausanias in his travelogues to have been inscribed in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi; this aphorism has been attributed to Chilon of Sparta, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Solon of Athens, Thales of Miletus, and Phemonoe.

⁸⁷ “Poimandres” means in Egyptian “knowledge of Re,” the sun god. In this tractate, Poimandres, also described as the Mind of Sovereignty, teaches Hermes (and asks him to spread the message to others) that individuals can learn his “Word” and become “Sons of God.”

⁸⁸ We should remember here that Philippe de Mornay, adherent of the Reformation, explained in his *Treatise on the Truth* (translated in part by Sir Philip Sidney in 1587) that Hermes taught that God’s “Word” was synonymous with “his Son.”

⁸⁹ There are 40 places in the NT where Jesus is given the title “Son of God.” See for instance, Matthew 16:16, “son of the living God”; Luke 1:35, he “shall be called the Son of God”; John 1:49, “thou art Son of God.”

century. Throughout the Middle Ages, the belief that only Jesus was the Son of God dominated the intellectual sphere. It was not until the Renaissance, with the reapplication of the Hermetic tradition, that humanity became invested in the notion that all human beings could be “Sons of God” if they underwent the process of becoming self-determining beings via the investigation of nature and the “self.”⁹⁰

What this illustrates is that early Jewish mythology, Christology, and the Platonic and Hermetic discourses were involved in a syncretism, appropriating terminology, philosophy, and theology to fit a particular milieu. Whether the Hermetic tradition was drawing from Jewish mythology or whether the chronology follows as Hermetic, Jewish, Platonic, then Christian, the point remains clear that by the time the Hermetic tradition is reintroduced in the Renaissance, authors gravitated toward this liberating mode of thinking as a way out of the orthodox Christian dogmas that insisted on mankind’s sinfulness and lack of agency. The Humanist movement helped pave the way for individuals’ sense of autonomy and ability for acquiring knowledge. Yet, the Hermetic mode of thinking provided a deeper spiritual learning beyond orthodox Christianity. It is in this context that Ficino and the other Florentine Platonic Academists,⁹¹ the Cambridge Platonists,⁹² and the Rosicrucians reintroduced the Hermetic tradition to satisfy the

⁹⁰ In Valentinian Gnosticism, this “Son of God” concept is expressed as both a metaphorical and physical anointing process by which a person experienced spiritual resurrection and is no longer called a Christian but a Christ. In this way, anyone who has learned the “Word” is anointed as “Christ.” See Pearson for further details, 179. This bears similarities with Christ’s words in Col. 1:25-27 that men have a “Christ” or “image of God” within them which is activated by learning the “Word”: “the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

⁹¹ Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano, Christoforo Landino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Gentile de’ Becchi, Lorenzo and Guiiano de Medici.

⁹² Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, Benjamin Whichcote, Peter Sterry, John Smith, Nathaniel Culverwell, John Worthington, George Rust, Anne Conway, and John Norris.

growing need for a system of knowledge that communicated a freer and deeper⁹³ exploration about the nature of mankind and God.

External and Internal Gnosis

In the Hermetic texts, Hermes Trismegistus is presented as a teacher of theology and philosophy. He provides a method of salvation that one can gain by uniting knowledge of the world, the self, and God in a tangible, intellectual, and religious/esoteric process that only the individual can accomplish through his own work. The belief that individuals cannot procure salvation on their own began with the Early Church Fathers such as Ignatius and Clement of Alexandria. In direct opposition to this Christian view, Hermetism and other Gnostic⁹⁴ and Neoplatonic⁹⁵ doctrines argued that salvation was within; in this way, gnosis is more important than faith because salvation is the knowledge and experience of a relationship with the divine. Ultimately, Plato's argument that knowledge of the Forms is a kind of remembrance illustrates a similar strain of thought; within everyone is the knowledge from which one can begin the process of knowing; and thus, although Plato does not refer to "salvation," his argument that souls can regain their original state of excellence is similar to Christian doctrines' view of salvation as the return to Heaven through an internal means. Similarly, Jesus illustrates in Luke 17:20-21 this same teaching, "the Kingdom of God is within."

⁹³ "Freer" because the Hermetic texts espouse that individuals have the ability to know God and be god in comparison to the Puritan view that individuals could not know God and "deeper" because the Hermetic texts penetrated to the philosophical-theological realm as opposed to remaining on the surface of historical and political issues.

⁹⁴ Thomas Christianity and the Hermetic tradition are the two main Gnostic traditions that emphasize self-knowledge as the process toward salvation. Other such Gnostic texts as the *Gospel of James* promote that Jesus obtained this gnosis/salvation and that others could as well.

⁹⁵ This process of inward knowing or self-exploration is comparable to Plotinus' (205-270 CE) Neoplatonic teachings in the *Enneads* written down by Porphyry.

While the Hermetic and Neoplatonic texts stress that the investigation of nature is the pathway to obtaining “salvation,” Jesus’ teaching is devoid of investigation of the natural world. Although Plato⁹⁶ urges for the study of nature’s harmonies and movements, he simply refers to a contemplative study. In opposition, the Hermetic texts urge for the physical study of nature; they promote both the contemplative and active investigation of nature to emulate nature’s order within the mind, body, and soul. In this way, the Hermetic doctrines influenced New Science methodologies, with their emphasis on experiencing and experimenting with nature.

Hermetism in the Restoration

What happened to the Hermetic tradition in England during the later half of the 17th century? The Puritan faith, a derivative of Calvinism, dominated English intellectual life in the mid 17th century. This faith promoted the belief in direct divine determinism often called voluntarism, which claimed that God controlled the fate of individuals and entire nations. Puritan providentialism shared some similarities with mechanist materialism, a philosophy that was gaining hold in the secular sphere with its most prominent theorist Hobbes. Both of these systems of thought argued that any movement in nature was caused by the intervention of an outside power, thus denying any autonomous individual action. Puritan theologians and Anglican scientists promoted the view that the world was governed by an arbitrary and unrestricted God. In a similar manner, as John Rogers illustrates, despite the “attempts to establish a disinterested realm of objective knowledge, the members of the Royal Society tended more often than not to envision a corpuscular universe, governed arbitrarily by an absolutist power” (7).

⁹⁶ The entire dialogue of Plato’s *Timaeus* is from the mouth of a Pythagorean philosopher Philolaus and not Socrates because in *Phaedo*, Socrates’ renounced the investigation of nature.

Yet around the same time as these theological and scientific structures of thought, alternative materialist philosophies were contending to construct the best scheme of knowledge to convey truth. One of these alternative philosophies was the vitalist movement which burgeoned in the 1650s, the same year the English translation of the *Corpus* was published. It is my contention that the vitalist philosophy grew out of the philosophical tenets of the Hermetic tradition. Vitalism, endorsed by Jean Baptist van Helmont, William Harvey, and Francis Glisson, promotes a theory of material self-movement and thus individual agency. This philosophy contends that power of reason and self-motion is infused in matter and thus energy or spirit is no longer understood as immaterial but rather immanent within bodily matter. This philosophy of matter stems from the Hermetic belief that matter and soul work together to create a living model of Mind. This belief is echoed in Paracelsus' teaching that matter and spirit are actually one self-active entity—that soul is in matter.⁹⁷ Vitalism expresses the Hermetic view of regenerative, self-moving powers of natural organic substances;⁹⁸ but instead of focusing on nature as a reflection of God's being and power, vitalists tended to confine their perspectives of material self-determination within the scope of nature, which led to the absence of the conception of God within nature in the 18th century. For instance, Marvell's poetry does not depict an anthropomorphic God pressing mankind forward to

⁹⁷ We can see some of the beginning stages of a vitalist theory in Aristotle for he argued that soul is within living things; the soul is that which drives the body to preserve its form. The body then is the instrument of the soul, which helps the soul move to complete the purpose it is supposed to serve, and it is the soul that moves body to this final cause.

⁹⁸ *Asc II*: "Matter is generative by itself, without the help of anything else" (125) because "every living being that is material, is caused, not by things outside the body, but by things within it, which operate outwards from within" (56). This Hermetic mode of thinking is reflected in the vitalist belief that spirit is in matter, a theory that is shared by Aristotle.

redemption but rather sees Nature as this force.⁹⁹ Ultimately, vitalism was overshadowed by mechanistic philosophies,¹⁰⁰ which promoted that every phenomenon in the universe could eventually be explained in terms of mechanical laws; the new mechanistic system of knowledge was fundamentally incompatible with the notions of free will and individual agency.

In the latter half of the Renaissance and the Restoration, many authors were expressing their fears regarding the vitalist claim of free will and individual agency. For instance, Gerrard Winstanley in *Fire in the Bush* 1650 states, “when mankinde once sees, that his teacher and ruler is within him; then what need is there of a teacher and ruled without; they will easily cast off their burden” (196).¹⁰¹ This bears similarities to Hermes’ teaching that many individuals will use the Hermetic philosophy to justify their wickedness. He states that humans have the tendency to “put off on Destiny the responsibility for evil, and so [they] will never refrain from any evil deed” (*Sto* XI, 170). In this framework, certain authors were afraid that individuals would allow their desires for power to overshadow taking responsibility for their actions; thus authors such as Hobbes argued for the preservation of monarchy to prevent anarchic actions. Ultimately, both the Hermetic tradition and vitalism gave way to Cartesian materialism, only to resurface again in the 19th-century Transcendentalist Movement and again in the 20th century with New Age philosophy.

⁹⁹ See Marvell’s “The Garden” where he longs for the Edenic state of Nature, which replenishes itself without the need for mankind’s labor. Here, God’s presence within nature is not the focus. See also “Bermudas” where the New World is associated with this Edenic state of nature.

¹⁰⁰ Democritus exemplifies mechanistic thinking while Aristotle exemplifies vitalist thinking.

¹⁰¹ See Rogers, 220. We must remember here too that Winstanley’s text was published the same year the only English translation of the *Corpus* was published.

I have gone into a lengthy discussion of the history of Hermes, the historical reception of the Hermetic discourses, and Renaissance and Restoration philosophers' endorsements of this body of knowledge for two reasons: it is necessary to discuss the evolutionary directions of the Hermetic tradition throughout classical Greece to the Renaissance in order to gain a greater understanding of how the Hermetic mode of thinking was presented to figures in the Renaissance and further to see what these authors added to this system to make it a relevant "living philosophy" for their own times.

Theoretical Agenda for Analysis

In my first chapter, "Ascending to Godhead: the Hermetic Experience of Achieving Higher Consciousness in *King Lear*," I argue that Shakespeare highlights the Hermetic attitude toward alchemy, astrology, and theurgy to illustrate in microcosm the experience of obtaining self-mastery via self-transformation. In the chapter, "'Sound Reason and True Religion': The Unification of New Science and Hermetic Principles in *New Atlantis*," I argue that Bacon highlights the Hermetic tenet that all individuals may become Sons or Daughter of God by uniting the scientific investigation of nature with a new form of religion that embraces individuals' divinity rather than their iniquity. In the chapter, "'By steps we may ascend to God': the Hermetic Paradigm of a Physical World Education in *Paradise Lost*," I argue that Milton highlights the Hermetic precept that salvation, one's embodiment of God's Word and thus one's obtainment of the title Son of God, is obtained when one has learned to reflect God's goodness, especially during times of trial and temptation.

The Late 16th and Early 17th Centuries and the Hermetic Mentality: Drama

In my discussion of *Lear*, I illustrate Shakespeare's participation in the Hermetic paradigm by discussing his adaptations of Hermetic terminology and metaphors. I argue that *Lear* is a *moving portrait*¹⁰² of the Hermetic trope of self-mastery because it illustrates to audience members the "living experience" of how it might look for one to participate in the process of "training the soul" to become a self-determining being. Theatre itself is a trope of discovery both onstage and off; for the metaphor *theatrum mundi* expresses that theatre can act as a stand-in for real life. Thus the genre of drama is perfectly situated to teach the masses how they too may engage with the Hermetic mode of thinking. Both during the play and long after audience members have gone home, the visual representations of the "living Hermetic philosophy," lingering in individual's minds, help to foster a desire within individuals to experiment with how they themselves might put the Hermetic trope of self-mastery into practice. In this way, the play becomes an experimental project, aimed at helping audiences articulate truths about the nature of human experience within the philosophical lens of the Hermetic tradition.

Instead of framing the trope of kingship within the familiar argument of a divinely appointed king upon which the kingdom humbly receives direction, Shakespeare interweaves the Hermetic trope of self-mastery (aligning the trope of statecraft with the trope of self-reliance) to illustrate that the spiritual health of the state is mirrored in the spiritual health of individual leaders. While Jonson is invested in denouncing the scheme

¹⁰² I use "moving" here both in the sense that, through pathos, audience members are emotionally affected and in the sense that the play is presented in action on stage.

of practical alchemy as a delusional art dominated by cozeners in *Mercury Vindicated*¹⁰³ and *The Alchemist*, I argue that Shakespeare highlights the spiritual side of alchemy to give people the theoretical tools for obtaining knowledge of the self and knowledge of how to position the self within the larger scheme of human existence. It is in this context that I argue Shakespeare integrates the Hermetic overarching theoretical concepts of alchemy, astrology, and theurgy in order to promote individuals agency in transforming themselves into divine, self-determining beings.

The Mid 17th Century and the Hermetic Mentality: Fiction

While Shakespeare uses the medium of the stage to show the masses a visual example of how one could “train the soul,” how one could undergo a spiritual rebirth, Bacon uses the medium of fiction to engage individuals in a vision of human perfectability. Both drama and fiction can be used for entertainment, instruction, moralizing, and advertising, and both drama and fiction can employ literary techniques of plot, symbolism, defamiliarization, and the like; but what *fiction* can provide that *stage drama* cannot is the freedom to “enter” a temporal world of thought not influenced by mob mentality.¹⁰⁴ In other words, while philosophical messages can get lost amongst the crowd’s desire for sensationalism in theatre, they are more easily communicated in fiction because of the nature of *extensive narration* to tell what characters think and do,

¹⁰³ In this masque, Jonson has Mercury (the Roman god summoned by alchemists to assist them in their transformation of baser metals to pure,) defend himself against those who have misused his protean art. Jonson has Mercury go so far as to denounce the art of alchemy as impious and fraudulent.

¹⁰⁴ I am referring to drama’s first role as performance over its readable function. Although *King Lear* was published in quarto form in 1608 and 1619 and in folio form in 1623, I am referring to the one recorded performance in 1606 in which audience members encountered on stage an example of soul perfection. Although drama may use similar techniques such a dialogue and narration, in its stage form, drama is already twice removed from an individualized experience: audience members have to mentally separate themselves from the others in the theatre in order to experience the performance unobstructed by others’ perceptions and reactions—this is virtually an impossible thing to accomplish. Thus for the sake of this project, I am strictly referring to drama’s primary goal of presenting a show on stage for multiple people in one setting.

rather than necessarily being bound to “show” what they do. In this way, fiction is a closer genre to essay writing than drama, for even though symbols and imagery may be difficult to interpret, using characters as the spokesmen for the author is more easily constructed through fiction’s narration than in stage drama’s dialogue.

Thus for Bacon, whose most familiar mode of communication was the essay, fiction not only provides similar narrative tools from which to convey his philosophical argument, but it also more readily illustrates that the internalization of ideas and the embodiment of them is an individual process, aided by the help of others, (in this case other characters), but grounded in the internal experience of the individual. Thus the genre of fiction gives Bacon this platform to illustrate that one must fully internalize and process ideas before he can institute change. *New Atlantis* is a “working model” of Bacon’s epistemological project that depicts individual’s ability and responsibility to investigate nature as part of the process to investigating nature, the self, and God and hence to understanding that individuals can become “mortal gods.” I contend that Bacon’s argument for the construction of a scientific community is better understood when we interpret character actions, imagery, and rhetoric through the lens of the Hermetic tradition.

The Late 17th Century and the Hermetic Mentality: Poetry

While Bacon’s fiction gives readers an example of *what* it looks like to put the Hermetic philosophy into practice, Milton’s epic gives readers an experience of *how* one can put the Hermetic philosophy into practice. In walking us through the stages of mankind’s and the angels’ development, from their first condition to their falls to their potential rise, Milton is able to provide for his readers a semblance of a spiritual

education. And in providing the process or the steps for regaining salvation, readers are able to experience in their minds and thence to experiment in their everyday lives how to give material form to philosophical ideas. I argue that, contrary to the Hobbesian and Puritan worldview, Milton embraces the paradox of God both outside and within nature: although God is within human beings, individuals may not always reflect the God within themselves. Thus, for Milton, humanity's fall was fortunate as it provided the opportunity for self-examination and intellectual and moral growth. Milton argues that his epic justifies "the ways of God to men." Yet, ultimately, he attempts to justify the ways of "men to men." In highlighting individuals' responsibility for their own downfalls and subsequent evils in the world, Milton draws attention to individuals' responsibility and ability for creating their own redemption in a program of education. In this way, I argue that Milton attempts to keep the Hermetic philosophical-theological attitude thriving in the Restoration. The Restoration was dominated by Puritan and material mechanistic thought, mentalities that did not allow for free will and individuals' ability to gain salvation on their own. It is in this environment that Milton attempts to retain the Hermetic dialectic of God within nature in order to promote that humankind could gain knowledge of God and knowledge of the self as divine.¹⁰⁵ It is in this framework that Milton is able to present the Hermetic ideal of transforming earth into heaven by showing readers that they may participate with God in acts of goodness and thus acts of creation.

¹⁰⁵ Even though the heyday of translations of the Hermetic texts spans from 1463-1593, many Restoration writers were engaged with the Hermetic philosophy, such as Cudworth in England and Hanneman in Germany. In this way, Milton was not the only one during his time that was trying to keep the Renaissance Hermetic mentality alive in the Restoration. Most prominently, Kircher, Webster, Cudworth, and More attempted to revitalize the Hermetic precepts that life was a form of spiritual education gained through the study of nature, the self, and God and also that individuals were able to become god-like because they are a reflection of God.

I will show that *Paradise Lost* intimates the ways in which individuals could go about embodying divinity through literary tropes and techniques such as metonymy and accommodated speech. Milton's argument for the regaining of one's god-like is articulated in the Hermetic maxim that one must remain true to the "self" in the face of controversy: one can avoid overhasty actions and pressures to concede to temptation by being aware of the true essence of God within. Similarly to Gloucester's loss of sight in *King Lear*, Milton as poet-speaker aligns his physical blindness to the notion of a fortunate fall because, as he described, it allowed him to see and tell of things invisible to the mortal sight. This concept of physical or metaphorical loss of corporeal sight in order to gain spiritual awareness of the self as divine is central to the Hermetic discourse; for in being physically or metaphorically blind, one is able to *experientially* "see" the difference between good and bad through internal reflection.

Naming Hermes in their Texts

Shakespeare's, Bacon's, and Milton's inclusion of the symbols and the philosophical aims of the Hermetic tradition would not have been possible without the rediscovery of the Hermetic texts in 1491, the subsequent translations of them, and even the Casaubon controversy surrounding their authenticity; for all three of these components caught people's attention, which required them to decipher for themselves whether or not they ascribed to the philosophical-theological tenets located within the texts. Yet one may ask, if these authors were truly incorporating the philosophical tenets of the Hermetic tradition, why did they not mention Hermes Trismegistus or the texts attributed to him by name? Contrary to initial perception, both Bacon and Milton cite

reference to Hermes.¹⁰⁶ For instance, Bacon compares James I's wisdom with Hermes' in his dedication in *Advancement*: "because there is met in your Majesty a rare conjunction, as well of divine and sacred literature, as of profane and human; so as your Majesty standeth invested of that triplicaty, which in great veneration was ascribed to the ancient Hermes; the power and fortune of a king, the knowledge and illumination of a priest, and the learning and universality of a philosopher" (5). We must remember here that James I encouraged Isaac Casaubon to discredit the antiquity of the *Hermetica*. Since Bacon was attempting to influence James I to adopt his new plan for a Great Instauration, he would have to couch any Hermetic endorsements as overarching philosophical arguments. Thus, beyond aligning James I with Hermes in his dedication in *Advancement*, Bacon would have to extract any Hermetic references to names or passages in order to strengthen his chances in persuading the king.

Additionally, Milton in his Latin poem *Ad Joannem Rousium* (1646) makes reference to Hermes as the patron of learning: "Now at last I bid you look forward to quiet rest...in the blessed retreats provided by kind Hermes...where the coarse tongue of the vulgar shall never penetrate, and whence the crowd of uncouth readers shall ever be far off. But perhaps our remote descendents and an age of greater wisdom and purer heart will render fairer judgment on all things" (par.7).¹⁰⁷ Milton here refers to Hermes as the wise ancient who had greater judgment and wisdom in all matters of learning. Thus, we should understand Milton's claim in *Christian Doctrine* that he devotes his "attention to the Holy Scriptures alone" as representative of his desire not to listen to those "heres[ies] or sect[s]" or "heretical writers" whose "unthinking distortions"

¹⁰⁶ Shakespeare, however, does not mention Hermes by name in his sonnets or plays.

¹⁰⁷ Milton sent this poem to John Rouse, Oxford University Librarian, to add to his other works in the public library. We should also remember Milton's reference to Hermes in "Il Penseroso."

opposed the understanding in the Bible (123-4). Since the Hermetic texts espouse the same spiritual messages as those Milton drew from the New Testament (a meaning produced outside of orthodox Christian dogma), we should not categorize the *Hermetica* in Milton's list of "heretical" texts. Rather, we should view the Hermetic texts for both Bacon and Milton as foundational to the expansion of their understanding of the subtle spiritual message in the New Testament—that all men may become Sons of God.

Henceforth, I argue that Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton omit Hermetic citations and technical alchemical terms in order to avoid being dragged into the Casaubon controversy regarding the authenticity of the Hermetic texts and the controversy regarding alchemy as a practice of cozenry. Additionally, I contend that they refrain from using these terms because the terms distract viewers/readers from focusing on the depth of the Hermetic philosophical message. For instance, Jonson's exhaustive list of alchemical terms in *Alchemist* inhibits viewers from being able to decipher the deeper meaning of the alchemical process because the alchemical terms force minds to focus on the surface of the topic.¹⁰⁸ In order to avoid this, I argue that Shakespeare provides enough occult language, such as "sulphur," "the wheel of fire," "tears" that "scald like molten lead," and the reference to Hecate, the Greek goddess of the three paths or the three fold kingdoms of the earth, sea, and sky,¹⁰⁹ in order to signal to his viewers that he is engaged in the occult tradition but in the most overarching and philosophical way.

¹⁰⁸ Obviously here I am not trying to claim that Jonson was trying to get his audience to learn about the deeper philosophical message of alchemy. For truly, Jonson's aims are to pull people away from "buying into" the alchemical promise for getting rich. Thus, alchemical terminology keeps people on the surface of alchemical understanding; for it forces people to reside in the thoughts dealing with the technical pursuit for riches.

¹⁰⁹ Hecate is depicted in Greek vase painting as holding twin torches, which she used to help Demeter find Persephone. As the goddess of the moon, Hecate was regarded as Persephone herself. In Ptolemaic Alexandria, Hecate was the goddess of sorcery, Queen of ghosts. She is associated with witchcraft and wisdom and thus was often depicted together with Solomon, the worker of marvels. In 1918, Roman

Similarly, I argue that Bacon and Milton avoid citing “authority” or occult terminology because people can get caught up in the “who” and “when” and lose sight of the important philosophical message. It is the deeper philosophical-theological message that Shakespeare, and Bacon, and Milton want their audiences to assimilate, a message grounded in the Hermetic mode of thinking, not in their affiliation within one religious esoteric group more than another.

A Note on the Use of Texts

I use Walter Scott’s 1924 English translation of the *Hermetica*—the collection of the 17 *Corpus Hermeticum* tractates, the *Asclepius*, and *Stobaeus* fragments—because first, Dr. John Everard’s 1650 English translation of Patrizi’s 1591 version occurred after both Shakespeare’s and Bacon’s texts; secondly, Everard’s translation entitled *The Divine Pymander* in XVII books based on Ficino’s *Pimander* is not a reliable translation; and thirdly, Everard only translated some of the *Libellus* tractates from the *Corpus* and did not translate the *Asclepius*¹¹⁰ or the *Stobaeus* fragments. I have chosen to use Scott’s English translation instead of Brian Copenhaver’s more modern and interlinear translation mainly because I believe Scott’s translation is more fluid and poetic, and thus closer to the mentality of the literary authors in this study.

Copenhaver regards Scott’s translation as containing more personal idiosyncrasies rather than precise translations.¹¹¹ While Scott’s translation can be considered “loose,” because he did not execute an interlinear translation and because he chose vocabulary

archaeologists excavated at Ostia a bronze disc, depicting Solomon as a magician stirring a cauldron with a long ladle on the one side and the figure of triple Hecate on the other side. See Thorndike.

¹¹⁰ Ficino published the first 14 tractates out of the 17 in the *Corpus* under his title *Pimander* and published his Latin version of the *Asclepius* in 1469.

¹¹¹ See page liii of Copenhaver’s translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Asclepius*.

words fitting for his own times, the meaning of his passages are not compromised.¹¹²

When comparing Scott and Copenhaver's¹¹³ translations, we can see that both texts contain the same meaning even though they use two different methods for translation. While Copenhaver's text is more technically accurate in word order, Scott's syntactical flow and poetic word choice create mental visions closer to the heart of the poetic world of the Renaissance. For instance, Scott's version of CH I: "But Mind the Father of all, he who is Life and Light, gave birth to Man, a Being like to Himself. And he took delight in Man, as being His own offspring; for Man was very goodly to look on, bearing the likeness of his Father" (49) has more poetic flow compared to Copenhaver's technical translation: "Mind, the father of all, who is life and light, gave birth to a man like himself whom he loved as his own child. The man was most fair: he had the father's image" (3).

The earliest edition of the *Tablet*, the text used most prominently as validation for alchemy in the Renaissance, is attested to be in circulation in the 8th-century Arabic text *Mystery of Creation* by Balinus, the pseudo-Apollonius of Tyana. Hugo von Santalla translated this text into Latin in the 12th century.¹¹⁴ In the 12th century, many texts were translated from Arabic by Averroes and Avicenna, thus bringing a large part of Greek philosophy back into the cultural memory of the West. When I quote from the *Tablet*, I use Hortulanus' translation and commentary because this famous commentary on the *Tablet* is found in a number of books and alchemical collections in Latin. It was first published in English version in Roger Bacon's *The Mirror* (1597), and thus most readily

¹¹² See Appendix II for a juxtaposition of the passages used in this dissertation from both Scott's and Copenhaver's translations in order to see that both versions convey the same meaning.

¹¹³ Copenhaver used the Greek and Latin texts of the Bude edition of the *Hermetica* produced in 1945 by Arthur D. Nock and Festugiere. Academic study of the *Corpus Hermeticum* began with Richard Reitzenstein with his *Poimandres*, Leipzig 1904, followed by Walter Scott 1904, A. J. Festugiere 1954 & 1967, A. S. Ferguson 1936, A. G. Gilbert 1992, Jean-Pierre Mahe 1978, Garth Fowden 1986, and Brian Copenhaver 1992.

¹¹⁴ See Ebeling, 49.

available to the authors in this study. Thus, some of the terms have a British spelling as in “inferiours” for our modern spelling “inferiors.”

Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton could have had access to Ficino’s Latin 1471 translation of the *Corpus*, under the title *Pimander* (24 editions of Ficino’s text were printed up to 1641)¹¹⁵ and the Latin translations of the *Asclepius* were available throughout both the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Restoration in addition to Ficino’s 1469 translation of the *Asclepius*.¹¹⁶ The original Greek text of the *Corpus*¹¹⁷ reappeared in 1554 in an edition by Adrien Turnebe¹¹⁸ and Foix de Dandale published a bilingual Greek and Latin edition in Bordeaux 1574, reprinted in Cologne in 1600. It is possible that Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton could have come in contact or even read these texts in the original Greek; but as Jonson retorts that Shakespeare had “small Latin and less Greek” in his “To the Memory of...William Shakespeare,” thus drawing attention to Jonson’s supposed superior learning in classical language, it seems more likely that any contact Shakespeare could have had with the Hermetic texts may be Ficino’s Latin translation or Foix de Dandale’s bilingual version, since all schoolboys were competently trained in Latin. It is even possible that Shakespeare may not have read any Hermetic texts but was rather incorporating the philosophical message of the Hermetic tradition that was widely available in the Neoplatonic circles of his day.

At this point, I would like to disclose that we do not have tangible proof for whether Shakespeare, Bacon, or Milton read the Hermetic texts. Yet as no author writes

¹¹⁵ See Ebeling, 64.

¹¹⁶ Lactantius handed down the Greek original *Asclepius* and *Quodvultdeus*, Bishop of Carthage and a correspondent of Augustine, translated it into Latin in 437-439.

¹¹⁷ The original Greek text is alleged to have been written in 270 CE.

¹¹⁸ Adrien Turnebus published this Greek edition using a complete manuscript of the *Corpus* and included Angelo Vergexio’s *Suda* entry on Hermes as well as three excerpts from *Stobaeus*. (See Copenhaver, xlix).

in a vacuum, what we can do is gather the evidence, the clues embedded in the authors' texts, to piece together a portrait that emits the same philosophical-theological tenets described in the Hermetic discourse, a discourse that had not seen a major revival in the West since the first few centuries BCE in Alexandria, up until the 15th century that is.

The Meaning of "Hermetic"

It is important to clarify the meaning of "Hermetic." The term "hermetic" with a lower case "h" is currently understood to mean something securely sealed. It may also be used to talk about when language and texts are incomprehensible. This definition of the term "hermetic" was first used by Theodore W. Adorno to designate the character of art that is devoid of social utility. Adorno did not have in mind the *Hermetica* of late classical antiquity. Additionally, according to Florian Ebeling, Heinrich Rombach inappropriately applies the term "Hermetics" with a capital "H" to a form of philosophy of "impermeability, inaccessibility, incompressibility" which he sees as the antithesis of hermeneutics (140).¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the term "hermetism" with a lower case "h" has been used by literary writers such as Wendell V. Harris, taking their cues from Umberto Eco, to denote a poststructuralist meaning: the belief that texts have indeterminate meanings and the denial of authorial intention.¹²⁰

None of these definitions are directly relevant to this study because they do not refer to the philosophical-theological mode of thinking found within the *Hermetica* tractates, dating to the first century BCE but drawing from the early Egyptian and late Greek philosophical-theological traditions and early Jewish mythology. In the 19th century, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) in *Isis Unveiled* outlines 19th-century

¹¹⁹ See Ebeling, 140.

¹²⁰ See Harris, 27.

groups, “Hermetic Brothers of Light” and the “Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor,” who espoused the teachings of the Hermetic tradition. These groups used the Hermetic texts to form an alternative belief set to the materialistically oriented mechanistic science, just as authors in the Renaissance and the Restoration used the texts as an alternative to the proscriptive dogmas of original sin and determinism of Catholic and Protestant faiths.

Therefore, I use the term “*Hermetica*,” with a capital “H” and always italicized, to refer specifically to the Hermetic tractates in circulation in the 15th-17th centuries, such as Ficino’s *Pimander*.¹²¹ I use the term “Hermetism” with a capital “H” to refer to the tradition or philosophical belief, which was known to the early Church Fathers Clement, Augustine, and Ireneas. Lastly, I use the term “Hermetic” with a capital “H” to refer to the philosophical-theological mode of thinking, traditionally thought to have been derived from the teachings of the man who supposedly existed around 5,000 BCE and was later deified as the god Thoth in the Egyptian tradition, Enoch in the Hebrew tradition, Hermes in the Greek tradition, and Set in the Arab tradition. During the 17th century, the adjectives “Hermetic” and “Hermetical” were in use, such as in Browne’s 1643 reference to “Hermetical Philosophers” in *Religio Medici* (52).

¹²¹ *Pimander* is Ficino’s title for the *Corpus Hermeticum*; the Mind of the universe who teaches Hermes is called Pimander, Egyptian meaning “knowledge of Re,” the sun god.

The Hermetic Texts Classified as Philosophical-Theological:¹²²

1. *Corpus Hermeticum* (CH)—a collection of 17 tractates written sometime between the 1st and 4th century CE and handed down in the Greek language in Byzantine manuscripts to the 14th -16th centuries. The first book involves a discussion between Poimandres (also known as *Nous* and God) and Hermes. Poimandres teaches the secrets of the Universe to Hermes while in later tractates Hermes teaches his son Tat and then Asclepius. Ficino translated the first 14 tractates into Latin from the Greek in 1471 under the title *Pimander*, 24 editions of his texts were printed up to 1641. Francesco Patrizi's Latin translation appeared in 1591. Dr. Evered published his English translation in 1650, which is considered unreliable by scholars.
2. *The Asclepius* (the famous physician son of Apollo and Coronis and vizier to Zoser who had the step pyramid of Saqqara built; Asclepius (Greek) was also called Imhotep (Egyptian)—the school of Imhotep was a continuation of a more ancient school founded by Thoth/Hermes in the legendary time of Ra, Osiris, and Isis)—written in Greek 270 CE and preserved in Quodvultdeus' 437 Latin translation throughout the Middle Ages. Parts of this text, in Coptic language, were found in the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945.¹²³ Ficino translated his own version of the Latin text in 1469. The original Greek text reappeared in 1554 in an edition by Adrien Turnebe. Foix de Dandale published a bilingual Greek and Latin edition in Bordeaux in 1574, reprinted in Cologne in 1600.
3. *Stobaeus* Fragments—so named after the 5th century John Stobaeus who compiled an anthology for the education of his son.
4. Fragments of Hermetic texts preserved in the writings of Church Fathers: such as Tertullian in the 3rd century, Lactantius in the early 4th century, and Augustine in the early 5th century. (Both Lactantius and Augustine admired and endorsed the Hermetic texts, but Tertullian raised attacks against them.)

The *Tabula Smaragdina*, the *Emerald Tablet*, is not classified by modern scholars as a Hermetic text; but during the Renaissance, authors such as Paracelsus believed that the text originated from Hermes.¹²⁴ The epithet “thrice great” Hermes Trismegistus is found at the end of this text and not on any of the other Hermetic texts: “Therefore / am I called Hermes Trismegistus, or the thrice / great Interpreter: hauing three parts of the philosophy / of the whole world.”¹²⁵ This

¹²² There are other texts classified as “vulgar *Hermetica*” or rather “technical *Hermetica*” to avoid any value judgment. These include 1) Astrological Theorems ascribed to Hermes, one in which is called the *Book on the 36 Decans* which perhaps dates to the 1st century BCE; 2) *Papyri Graecae Magicae* stemming from the 2nd to the 4th century in which Hermes appears as a magical healer; and 3) fragments mentioned in the writings of alchemist Zosimus of Panopolis of late 3rd to early 4th century, who called Hermes the forefather of alchemy. See Ebeling for further details, 11.

¹²³ Other Hermetic texts were found at Nag Hammadi dating from the 4th century, including 5 *Hermetica* in the Sahidic dialect, two which were previously unknown until 1945.

¹²⁴ For instance Henricus Nollius in *Naturae Sanctuarium: Quod est Physica Hermetica* 1619 reveals that he believed the *Tablet* to be written by Hermes.

¹²⁵ See the Hortulanus translation of the *Tablet* included in Bacon's *Mirror*.

text is thought to have been in circulation in the 8th century in the Arabic text *Mystery of Creation* by Balinus, the pseudo-Apollonius of Tyana. Hugo von Santalla translated this text into Latin the 12th century. According to legend and documented in the 12th century Latin translation of the *Tablet*, this tablet was found by Alexander the Great at Hebron (outside of Jerusalem) in the tomb of Hermes.¹²⁶ The first English translation was published with Roger Bacon's *The Mirror of Alchimy* in 1597. Isaac Newton translated the text into English in 1680.

Abbreviations of Texts:¹²⁷

I use the abbreviation *Corpus* when I discuss the entire *Corpus Hermeticum* compendium. I use the abbreviation CH with the respective roman numerals when I discuss specific tractates from the entire compendium. I use *Hermetica* to refer to all four Hermetic texts: *Corpus Hermeticum*, the *Asclepius*, *Stobaeus* fragments, and the *Tabula Smaragdina* (or the *Emerald Tablet*).

I use David Bevington's edition of Shakespeare's *King Lear* in *The Necessary Shakespeare*, 2nd edition, Jerry Weinberger's edition of Bacon's *New Atlantis*, and Barbara Lewalski's edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Hermetic Texts:

Corpus Hermeticum – CH

Asclepius – Asc

Stobaeus Excerpts – Sto

Tabula Smaragdina – Tablet

Bacon's Texts:

The Advancement of Learning – AL in citations and *Advancement* in text

The Great Instauration – GI in citations and *Instauration* in text

Novum Organum – NO in citations and *Novum* in text

Wisdom of the Ancients – *Wisdom* in citations and text

Description of a Natural and Experimental History – *Description* in citations and text

Milton's Texts:

Animadversions Upon the Remonstrants Defence Against Smectymnvvs – *Against Smectymnvvs* in text

Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce – *Discipline* in text

Christian Doctrine – CD in citations and *Christian Doctrine* in text

Reason of Church-Government – *Reason* in text

Paradise Lost – PL in citations

Paradise Regained – PR in citations

¹²⁶ See Abel and Hare, 2. The 12th century translation begins, "When I entered into the cave, I received the tablet zaradi, which was inscribed, from between the hands of Hermes, in which I discovered these words."

¹²⁷ All 17 tractates in the *Corpus* begin with *Libellus* followed by their tractate number in roman numerals. Similarly, all tractates in the *Asclepius* and *Stobaeus* excerpts are written in roman numeral.

Addendum

I envision this dissertation to be the beginnings of a larger body of work designed for nonspecialist readers and for university students engaged in the study of Hermetic philosophy in the historical, philosophical, and literary realms of the English Renaissance and Restoration. Our modern view on religion shares some similarities to the Greco-Roman world of the first century. Practices of self-abnegation and the view of original sin are not as prominent today as they were throughout the Middle Ages and the Reformation. New Age philosophies and religions have sprung up as alternatives to traditional religions, which stress alienation rather than the promotion of self-realization as the pathway to God, the main tenet of the philosophical-theological mode of thinking originating in Alexandria in the first century BCE. It is in this framework of modern spiritual interests that I believe this study bears great significance. For many young students of life are caught between the old world and the new. As they try to understand the philosophical and theological structures of the past to see where they fit within the scheme of the present, it may be helpful for them to understand the new hermeneutic of Renaissance philosophical-theological mode of living whereby ancient traditions, especially the traditions from Egypt and Greece, were given radically new spiritual meaning, resulting in the creation of a “new religion” in many respects—a religion that espoused a belief in manifesting one’s divine self in the physical world in order to create a heaven on earth with gods in human form.

Ascending to Godhead: the Hermetic Experience of Achieving Higher Consciousness in *King Lear*

“Who alone suffers suffers most i’ th’ mind” (3.6.104)¹²⁸

In the late 1970s, historians Frances Yates and Allen G. Debus demonstrated that the occult philosophy penetrated into many spheres of knowledge and experience in the Renaissance. However, later Shakespearean scholars have argued that the occult philosophy was not a central and distinct epistemology in the Renaissance.¹²⁹ As we strive to envision a holistic picture of Shakespeare’s world, we must understand that the occult philosophy, which was an alternative yet parallel mode of thinking to orthodox religion and humanism, influenced Shakespeare’s creative imagination. In this chapter, I concentrate on the elements that Shakespeare appropriates from the Hermetic texts—the philosophical and theological *backbone* of Renaissance occult philosophy. I contend that Shakespeare weaves into *King Lear* the three major elements of the Hermetic philosophy,¹³⁰ which correspond to the founder’s three-part wisdom of the universe: the performance of mystical alchemy, the attitude toward astrology, and the embodiment of theurgy.¹³¹ I will show that *Lear* is an epistemological allegory of the Hermetic philosophical-theological exercise of training the soul to obtain personal salvation.

¹²⁸ Physical world experiences are vehicles for analytical thinking.

¹²⁹ Wayne Shumaker does not agree that the occult was a dominant philosophy of the Renaissance. See Shumaker and Weiner. I agree with Yates and Debus that the occult mentality affected philosophers’ intellectual aims. In this dissertation, I am attempting to expand upon Yates’ and Debus’ historical research in order to gain a more detailed understanding of literary authors’ methods for incorporating this occult mentality. In this endeavor, I contend that it is important to go back to the source of inspiration for Renaissance occult philosophy, the Hermetic tradition.

¹³⁰ I use “philosophy” to refer to the pursuit of wisdom, truth, and knowledge rather than the study of morality or ethics.

¹³¹ Similarly to Hermes, Solomon is described as having tripartite wisdom of the world. In the “Philosophy of Solomon,” a manuscript of the late 16th century, Solomon had knowledge of three divisions: *moralis*, *naturalis*, *inspectiva* respectively in the three books of Solomon.

The process of soul advancement in the play corresponds to one's ability to apply the Hermetic knowledge of alchemy, astrology, and theurgy. There are two categories of alchemy:¹³² technical and spiritual. In terms of the technical side to alchemy, human beings can perfect material objects in nature through knowledge of the arts and sciences. In terms of the spiritual¹³³ side of alchemy, human beings' investigation into the mysteries of birth, death, and resurrection helps them to understand how to mirror these movements in their souls. The Hermetic texts promote that this spiritual rebirth takes place in Mind,¹³⁴ which is the intellectual and spiritual rebirth of the soul.¹³⁵ In this framework, the various stages of chemical distillation and fermentation are metaphorical processes for the *magnum opus* performed in the soul—separating pure from base in order to transmute the self to a higher consciousness.

Many Renaissance authors expound upon the Hermetic theme of alchemy as a spiritual practice. For instance, Robert Fludd (1574-1637) in *Truth's Golden Harrow*, replying to Patrick Scot's promotion of the technical side of alchemy in *The Tillage of Light* (1623), elucidates his view of alchemy as primarily an experiment of spirit.¹³⁶

¹³² The subject under the general category of alchemy is most prominent in the *Tablet* but it is also discussed in both the *Corpus* and the *Asclepius*. The process described in the *Tablet* is called the "operation of the Sunne," the process of the alchemical *magnum opus*, drawing the movement and powers from both heaven and earth to effect transformation of matter and spirit. Additionally, this same rebirth metaphor is expressed in CH XIII "no one can be saved until he has been born again" (98) and "I [Hermes] have been born again in Mind" (99); in CH XVI, "for by transmutation the things made are purged of evil" (107); and the *Asc* III "the new birth of the kosmos"—"it is a making again of all things good, a holy and awestrking restoration of all nature" (138). Ultimately, this is the same trope of rebirth that Jesus promoted in John 3:3-8, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again...born again of water and the spirit" and in John 3:7, "Ye must be born again."

¹³³ Zosimus of Panopolis in the early 4th century CE stressed the spiritual side of alchemy over the technical because, as he argued, this was the type of alchemy taught by Hermes.

¹³⁴ See CH XIII, "no one can be saved until he has been born again"; "I have been born again in Mind" (99) and CH XVI, "immortal bodies undergo change without dissolution, but the changes of mortal bodies are accompanied by dissolution" (109).

¹³⁵ See CH II, "The movement of the Kosmos then, and of every living being that is material, is caused, not by things outside the body, but by things within it, which operate outwards from within; that is to say, either by soul or by something else that is incorporeal" (56).

¹³⁶ Jung later draws upon this same idea of alchemy as a transformation of the soul.

Fludd argues that the Philosopher's Stone, explained in cryptic alchemical texts as the finished product of the *magnum opus*, is neither a stone nor an immaterial substance but rather a process by which the alchemist becomes "immortal"—reborn in spirit and mind.¹³⁷ For Fludd and other occult philosophers, the Hermetic branch of knowledge provides an alchemical practice of the soul. Similarly, Paracelsus (1493-1581) advocates alchemy as a quest to realizing the authentic *autos* self (*autos* = he who is himself).

I argue that Lear's mental and spiritual transformation, from a greedy and stubborn king to an individual who learns how to interact and care about others around him, is constructed through the lens of the Hermetic dialect of spiritual or symbolic alchemy. Through the course of the play, Lear is stripped not only of his identity but also of his actual clothing. I contend that Lear's tangible degradations are physical representations of Lear's mental/psychological and thus spiritual changes. Lear's transformation involves letting go of his pride and material possessions. For physical world objects *bind* individuals to illusory status markers and *blind* them to their real identities as self-determining beings. In spiritual alchemical transformation, individuals learn to make their physical world experiences mirror their spiritual understanding rather than allowing their physical world experiences shape and define their identities.

In the second category of the Hermetic philosophy, astrology is the study of the influences of the stars upon earth. Yet, counter to the medieval understanding of astrological influences, the Hermetic philosophy espouses that the heavenly realm does not dictate human actions. Individuals can reverse the course of "destiny" upon their lives through self-discovery in order to become self-determining beings. Destiny

¹³⁷ See Josten, 91-150 for the entire text of Fludd's "Truth's Golden Harrow."

(described as “daemons” from the realm of the stars)¹³⁸ governs those who focus on material gain and ignore the exercise of “training the soul.”¹³⁹ Yet, for those who focus on knowing the self and God, the “rational part of man’s soul is illuminated by a ray of light from God” and “remains free from the dominion of the daemons” of “Necessity.”¹⁴⁰ Thus in mastering the study of astrology, the Hermetic philosopher learns how to reverse the course of “destiny” upon his thoughts and actions.

Within this second theoretical category of Hermetic thought, I argue that Shakespeare deliberately has Edmund espouse the Hermetic view on astrology in order to help transform the social construct of bastardy, which imposes upon these individuals that they are innately evil and base.¹⁴¹ For within the literary trope of irony, we must remember that the signifier of the ironic sign, while it seems to signify one thing on the surface, actually points to a deeper meaning. On the surface, we might think that Edmund’s transmission of the Hermetic teaching of astrology is Shakespeare’s way of criticizing the Hermetic discourse (a view that we might see on a surface level because Edmund seeks to destroy others for personal gain). Yet, we must see deeper into the irony to understand that Edmund’s evil and base actions are natural consequences of the social bastard paradigm, which have limited his actions to “base.” In this way,

¹³⁸ See CH XVII, “The daemons then govern all our earthly life, using our bodies as their instruments; and this government Hermes called ‘destiny’” (111).

¹³⁹ See *Sto* VI, “A man must train his soul in this life” (163).

¹⁴⁰ See CH XVII, “But the rational part of the soul remains free from the dominion of the daemons, and fit to receive God into itself. If then the rational part of man’s soul is illuminated by a ray of light from God, for that man the working of the daemons is brought to naught; for no daemon and no god (planetary god) has power against a single ray of the light of God” (161). Similarly in *Sto* IX, “Now the intelligible substance, if it has drawn near to God, has power over itself [i.e. has free will]...it is not subject to Necessity...But if it falls away from God, it chooses the corporeal world, and in that way it becomes subject to Necessity, which rules over the Kosmos” (165).

¹⁴¹ Later in the Restoration, Milton redefines “high estate” as virtue not birth.

Shakespeare helps audience members see that proscriptive social laws can create destruction and corruption.

The last category, theurgy is the process by which the higher counterpart of the self, individuals' Mind/Intellect or Soul, gains divine consciousness by first undergoing a rebirth of the self. Theurgy is defined by Pico in *Apology* as "divine magic," which relies on divine spirits such as angels, archangels, and gods,¹⁴² as opposed to black magic, which relies on evil spirits. Yet in the Hermetic texts, the practice of theurgy is not defined as "magic"¹⁴³ but rather a natural event that occurs once individuals have learned and assimilated (made manifest in their beings) the "Word."¹⁴⁴ In learning the "Word," "the discourse concerning things divine,"¹⁴⁵ individuals learn the "Mind" of God and become Sons of God¹⁴⁶—a state in which "man[kind's] consciousness is wholly absorbed

¹⁴² For Augustine in *City of God* 10.10, theurgy is the "invention of lying demons" who long to "ensnare men's wretched souls in the fraudulent ceremonies of all those false gods, and to seduce them from the true worship of the true God." See Marback, 37. The *Notory Art of Solomon*, first published in a Latin version in 1600 by Agrippa and then in an English version in 1651 by Robert Turner, is a collection of diagrams and magic works for invoking angels and mystic figures to help the adept gain knowledge or communication with God. Textbooks of magic, such as *Ars Notoria* and *Sworn Book of Honorius* 13th century (a book classified as "Solomonic Grimoire") were attributed to Solomon because of his reputation for obtaining knowledge of God's Word. The magic practices depicted in these Solomonic Grimoires more closely represent Augustine's definition of theurgy as invocations of angels and demons. The Hermetic practice of theurgy also shares the same goal for obtaining salvation and knowledge of God; but the process for how one went about obtaining this knowledge differed drastically. Theurgy in the Hermetic texts does not involve magical incantations and use of talismans. It is interesting to note that in a manuscript copy of the *Sworn Book of Honorius*, said to have belonged to Ben Jonson, the word "Theurgis" is written on the flyleaves before the beginning and after the close of the text. If indeed this was Jonson's copy, we see that he understood theurgy in the Augustine sense of incantations and formulae more accurately represented in the term *goetia* (the practice of sorcery). See Thorndike, volume 7, page 279-284.

¹⁴³ Magic is not a central issue in the Hermetic texts. One should turn more to the Neoplatonists such as Plotinus Porphyry, Iamblichus, Synesius, and Proclus as sources for the theory of magic.

¹⁴⁴ In a similar fashion, Apollonius of Tyana (15-100BCE), who is considered a contemporary of Jesus, argues in *On Sacrifices* that God cannot be reached by sacrifices, rituals, or incantations but rather by a spiritual process involving *nous*. He stresses that God has no wish to be worshipped by humans because worship involves a passive form of engagement with God.

¹⁴⁵ See *Epilogue*, "our minds have been fed full with discourse concerning things divine" (147).

¹⁴⁶ See CH I, "The Light...even Mind, the first God, who was before the watery substance which appeared out of the darkness; and the Word which came forth from the Light is Son of God...for in you too, the Word is son, and the Mind is Father of the Word" (49).

in the knowledge of God.”¹⁴⁷ Theurgy, then, may be thought of as “magic” only in the general sense, of one’s obtainment of divine knowledge and thence the application of this knowledge in microcosm acts of creation,¹⁴⁸ and not the particular connotations of “conjunction.” Ficino in his translation of the Hermetic texts highlights the Hermetic and Neoplatonic understanding of theurgy not as “black magic” but rather as the practice of soul development.¹⁴⁹

Theurgy is a system of knowledge that provides techniques for soul purification, which lead to higher consciousness. Individuals need to experience spiritual transformation on their own because no one can provide salvation for another.¹⁵⁰ Yet, the experience of theurgy is often accomplished with the aid of a teacher who guides one through his self-discovery process. While Hermes functions as a teacher for Tat in the Hermetic discourses, I argue that Cordelia, Kent, and Edgar function as teachers for Lear. These characters help Lear learn how to “train his soul” to become a self-determining being, a process that combines the concepts of alchemy, astrology, and theurgy as interconnected practices that he must perform in order to gain a higher state of consciousness. I contend that Lear’s final death completes the Hermetic precept of theurgy—his transformation from base to pure helps him gain higher consciousness, which in turn allows him to mount upward and take the journey to the world above.

¹⁴⁷ See *Asc III*, “the darkness of error is dispelled from the soul, and truth is seen in all its brightness, and so man’s consciousness is wholly absorbed in the knowledge of God” (147).

¹⁴⁸ See *CH I*, Man “willed to make things for his own part also; and his Father gave permission, having in himself all the working of the Administrators”—the 7 Administrators who “encompass with their orbits the world perceived by sense; and their administration is called Destiny” (49).

¹⁴⁹ For Iamblichus and Plotinus, theurgy was the philosophy of contemplation, which provided the technique for the ascent of the soul. See Copenhaver and Schmitt’s *Renaissance Philosophy*, 160.

¹⁵⁰ Tat’s initiation into soul rebirth is an event of the soul that takes place within Tat himself—an event that Hermes as mystagogue can only trigger but not provide.

I suggest that we gain a greater understanding of *Lear* when we analyze it through the lens of Hermetic thought for two main reasons. First, the Hermetic mode of thinking was heavily influential during the time of the play's production (and we should always try to place an author's philosophical message within its milieu). Secondly, the death of innocent Cordelia and Lear's death seems to reflect annihilation of justice upon first reading. Yet, when we read Shakespeare's play through the lens of the Hermetic philosophy, the denouement provides a satisfying and spiritual conclusion; the play reflects faith in human agency to undergo transformation of the soul. I argue that at the end of the play, Lear, Cordelia, and Kent have reached higher consciousnesses by way of the symbolic alchemical process, which in turn enables them to make the journey to connect with the Hermetic All or the Christian God. In this way, Shakespeare integrates alchemical language and the Hermetic view of astrology in order to create a powerful metaphor for how one could transform his soul in the process of theurgy.

When juxtaposing the Hermetic language found in the *Hermetica* with the characters' language in the play, what emerges is a picture of self-mastery grounded more in the Hermetic dialectic of training one's soul to achieve higher consciousness than a portrait of moral philosophy grounded in Protestant practices of penance¹⁵¹ (which constricts moral transformation within the confines of biblical exegesis) or in the medical theories of physic circulating during this time. In the Protestant faith, mankind's sins are paid for by Christ's death and thus individuals' place in the next life is ensured. Yet, spiritual alchemy for the Hermeticist is the quest to embody one's god-like nature in this life, not in the afterlife. Additionally, physic practices focus on the science of healing for

¹⁵¹ The Protestant view of penance argues that although mankind's sins are already paid for by Christ's death, individuals should supplement the righteousness of Christ through faith and charity.

the body not on healing of the soul. While the Hermetic philosophy draws attention to the health of the physical body, it does so only in terms of allowing one's body/vehicle/garment to sustain the life of a person long enough to help them become skilled at mental and spiritual purification. Upon understanding this, I contend that the Hermetic tenet regarding spiritual purification and transformation is a more accurate lens to read *Lear*, where the concern is not on the body or in securing one's place in God's kingdom but rather on undergoing stages in discovering the self as a spiritual being.

Gary Ettari argues that Spenser in his poetry attempted to create a "self" that relied on the process of reading and textual production.¹⁵² Along similar lines, I would argue that Shakespeare's depiction of self-formation in *Lear* has to deal with the experience of mentally and tangibly applying the Hermetic tenets in one's life. Thus the stage is the best forum in which to present a "mock session" of this philosophy in visual form. I argue that Shakespeare attempted to broadcast an example of the Hermetic paradigm in action for individuals to imitate, a paradigm that modeled how the alchemical process is most profitable when seen as an event of the soul toward self-mastery, not a technical event for obtaining material riches. Just as the trio of Cordelia/Kent/Edgar is representative of Hermes' role of teacher or guide while Lear is representative of Tat's role as initiate into the learning the trope of self-mastery in the Hermetic discourses, audience members can identify themselves in the roles of both Lear and Tat as apprentices of the Hermetic mode of thinking who are guided by Cordelia/Kent/Edgar and ultimately by Shakespeare as the writer of the "mock" Hermetic session presented on stage.

¹⁵² See Ettari, 12.

Thus, I argue that the play serves as a “moving portrait” in an emotive sense, which propels audience members to become invested in characters’ triumphs and challenges, and in a simulation of real time experience, which metaphorically walks individuals through the steps they can take to become self-determining beings. By first “hooking” viewers into caring about characters, playwrights are in a perfect position to motivate individuals to imitate characters’ thoughts and actions—to apply, in their own lives at their own pace, the mental and physical gestures that they see and hear from characters on the stage. As Bruce R. Smith illustrates, an “actor’s motions could transform the air through which he moved, animating it in waves of force rippling outward from a center in his soul. His passions, irradiating the bodies of spectators through their eyes and ears, could literally transfer the contents of his heart to theirs, altering their moral natures” (136).¹⁵³ In this way, *Lear* engages audience members in experimentation. Through the example of characters themselves experimenting on stage—learning, failing, and then succeeding in applying the Hermetic philosophy—Shakespeare can depict the detailed systematic actions one encounters in the process of soul advancement.

Furthermore, by illustrating a moving picture of how a king achieves a philosophical form of spiritual health (not specifically bound to a religious form of spiritual health that requires one to believe in church dogmas), Shakespeare is able to illustrate the necessity for having the head of the state engage in human perfectibility. In this way, Shakespeare redefines the notion of the Divine Right of Kings to show that

¹⁵³ Live actors create an immediate emotional and mental affect on live audiences in stage performances. In the 17th century, passion became called emotions, the literal sense of movements outward. Stage performance provides this movement from the outside moving to the inside, moving from the mind, voice, and body of the actor to the internal mind of the audience.

even kings need to undergo the experience of transformation and rebirth to bring about a spiritual form of self-mastery, especially if they are to live up to their title as God's representatives on earth. Furthermore, a king is the best figure to put under the microscope of the stage to exemplify the process of transformation in Hermetic theory; for as James I states in *Basilikon Doron*, "kings being publike persons, by reason of their office, are as it were set...upon a publike stage, in the sight of all the people, where all the beholders eyes are attentiuely bent to looke and pry" (5). Thus audience members can learn how to engage in a similar *course* of self-mastery by watching a parable of a king learning spiritual correction. In this framework, I contend that *King Lear* highlights mankind's need for a spiritual program of education, which is sought not in church but deep within the individual's soul.

The setting and time frame of the play in pagan Britain creates an effective platform from which to exhibit the Hermetic philosophy in action. By depicting an individual's journey of self-discovery in a pre-Christian world,¹⁵⁴ Shakespeare can emphasize the Hermetic message without the constraints of Christian dogma and expectations. In this way, past and present meet on stage which Shakespeare molds to create a model for epistemological change for present and future generations; on stage, the pre-Christian world, one which saw the birth of the Hermetic discourses, meets the religious and political turmoil of the Elizabethan and Jacobean worlds. Ultimately what Shakespeare creates from the combination of the two worlds (pagan and Christian) is a potential third theoretical moment in history, a moment that models for his audience the process toward becoming aware of the self as a divine, creative being. As Phyllis Rackin

¹⁵⁴ In Monmouth's *True Chronicle History of King Leir* (1136), the supposed real King Leir ruled England around 800BCE. In Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577), Cordelia became queen of Britaine before the building of Rome by Romulus and Remus.

states, people in the Renaissance looked to the past “for the roots that would stabilize and legitimate their new identities” (4). By looking to the roots of the Hermetic philosophy in the pre-Christian world, Shakespeare attempts to model for his audience how the underlying tenets of the Hermetic trope of self-mastery may be put into practice. In this way, the theater for Shakespeare at this moment in his career becomes, not an instrument of ideological control or a site of subversion,¹⁵⁵ but rather a site for instructive modeling.

Shakespeare’s departure from the Leir stories further helps to create a forum from which to see the Hermetic philosophy in action.¹⁵⁶ For in choosing not to re-invest Lear with his royal garments and followers at the end of the play, Shakespeare focuses our attention on internal growth of characters rather than on external material riches.

Additionally, by drawing attention to Cordelia, Kent, and Edgar’s roles as Lear’s spiritual guides, Shakespeare diverges from the other Leir stories in order to draw attention to Lear’s purification and spiritual transformation rather than to characters’ rebellion against Lear. Thus, the play does not exhibit what Philip Stubbes’ argued in *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583)¹⁵⁷ that theatrical performances instruct audiences to “rebel against Princes,” but

¹⁵⁵ Some scholars have argued that the theater was an instrument of ideological control or as Leonard Tennenhouse called a forum where the ruling elite’s power was sanctioned. Other scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt argue that the theater was a site of subversion, which worked to undermine the dominant ideology.

¹⁵⁶ The common 4 Leir stories: Monmouth’s (1136) *True Chronicle History of King Leir*, Holinshed’s (1577) *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*; Spenser’s (1590) *Faerie Queen*; and Higgins’ (1590s) play in *Mirror for Magistrates*. All of these versions end with Leir, Cordelia, and her husband the King of France, defeating Lear’s other two daughters and regaining the kingdom. Thus these Leir stories end “happily” for Lear. Shakespeare’s version does not re-invest Lear with kingly apparel, with ensigns of royalty, or with a train of retainers. The first Lear play, *kinge leare*, was performed in 1595 according to the Stationer’s Register at the Rose Theater by a combined effort of the Queen and Sussex’s men. The first Lear play does not include the characters Edmund, Gloucester, Edgar, or the Fool; no one dies; and there is no storm or “madness.” Furthermore, the 1595 version is a comedy or a historical romance rather than a tragedy. Shakespeare’s version illustrates his ability to produce unity from heterogeneous materials, since as we further know that the Edgar/Gloucester subplot was inspired by Sidney’s *Arcadia* and perhaps the feigned suicide by leaping off a cliff into the sea was inspired by Marston’s *Malcontent* (1603).

¹⁵⁷ The 1574 act of the Common Council of London argued that the theater corrupted people with the “uttering of popular busye and seditious matters.” See Rackin 111.

more closely exhibits Thomas Heywood's argument in *Apology for Actors* (1612) that English history plays can provide lessons to the ignorant and unlearned. Furthermore, Goneril, Regan, and Edmund's interest in material gain, rather than unity of the social sphere, draws our attention to their inability to understand the Hermetic concept of the All in the One.¹⁵⁸ The three children are unable to learn that it is cooperation not selfishness that leads people to the understanding that everyone is connected to God. Shakespeare's play then becomes a redemptive tragedy as opposed to chronicle history¹⁵⁹ (to depict the history of the establishment of England's identity). Shakespeare's setting for the play in the pre-Christian past helps to create a closer link between pagan philosophy and Englishmen's role in the re-application of this mode of thinking. The play's setting in pre-Christian Britain does not create a longing for the past in audience's minds, a past that was unencumbered by penance and confessional tenets of Christian orthodoxy; rather it helps to shape a future paradigm of spiritual purification and self-development grounded in the Hermetic discourse.

One particular strain of analysis of the play argues that Shakespeare intended the play to illustrate the evils of political disunion.¹⁶⁰ Evidence for this may be seen in James I's attempt between 1604 and 1607 to get Parliament to approve the unification of England and Scotland because of the misfortunes that division brought to early Britain.¹⁶¹ Yet, such an analysis of Shakespeare's version may not provide an accurate

¹⁵⁸ The Hermetic tenet of All in the One illustrates that all humans are connected to each other because ultimately they are aspects of God. See Milton chapter for a detailed discussion.

¹⁵⁹ The entry for *King Leir* (1594) in the Stationer's Register referred to the play as a "Tragecall historie." Originally it was called a "Tragedie" but the word has been altered in the Register. Kenneth Muir states this suggests that the story of the play was already known as a tragedy. But the title page of *King Leir* calls it *The True Chronicle History*. See Muir's edition of *Lear*, xxii.

¹⁶⁰ See for instance, J. W. Draper's *Studies in Philology*, 178-85.

¹⁶¹ Here we should remember that the play was performed before court in 1606, so the possibility that Shakespeare may be integrating current historical affairs may be plausible.

understanding of the affect the play has on its audience; for Lear's division of the kingdom is quickly shown in the first scene (similar to the function of a prologue), and thus the focus of the play becomes Lear's growth in self-discovery. Evidence for this is seen in Shakespeare's act of truncating seven scenes of the other Leir stories into one scene. Additionally, none of the other Leir stories integrate Lear's mad scenes.¹⁶² In Shakespeare's version, Lear's madness is what enables him to acquire wisdom; for in "going mad," Lear is able to undergo the process of unlearning his selfish behavior in order to learn the importance of love, humility, and inner awareness.

In Aristotle's view of ideal tragedy, tragic drama is ultimately a healing journey through darkness and ruin with purgative and redemptive qualities. Tragedy provides an emotional cleansing or healing for audience members as they experience these emotions in response to the suffering of characters. This human pattern corresponds to the alchemical process that brings dissolution before repair. Philosophical alchemy promotes a science of perfection for the self, a science that requires individuals to admit responsibility for their faults and take action to purify the soul. In this way, Lear's alteration from a venerated king to beggar and toward higher consciousness reflects the process that metals undergo in the *magnum opus* of alchemy. Lear is comparable to the metal in need of transmutation from base to pure while the characters, Kent, Edgar, and Cordelia are representative of the chemical agents salt, sulfur, and mercury that help Lear undergo his transformation.

¹⁶² Muir suggests that Shakespeare may have been familiar with the story of Sir Brian Annesley (pensioner of Queen Elizabeth) who was declared "unfit to govern himself or his estate" in 1603. Two of his daughters, Wildgoose and Sandys, tried to get him certified as insane so they could get his estate. The youngest daughter Cordell wrote to Cecil, claiming that her father's services to the late queen "deserved a better agnomination, than at his last gasp to be recorded and registered a Lunatic." See introduction to Muir's edition of *Lear*, xliii.

Setting the Stage with an Alchemical Purpose

Shakespeare joined the alchemical conversation that contemporary writers, such as Greene and Jonson, participated in. Yet, unlike these writers' representations of alchemy as cozenry, Shakespeare exhibits in *Lear* that alchemy can be a powerful metaphor to help people transmute their base thoughts and actions. Metaphors are used to represent an abstract or intangible experience in terms of another experience that is more concrete or explicit. When we think of alchemy, we envision metals boiling on fire in a laboratory. In this scheme, the individual needing purification may be seen as the laboratory itself, the vessel is the individual's mind, and the specific metals are the individual's thoughts in the vessel of his mind. In this metaphorical image, the fire in the laboratory is representative of a person's consciousness that burns away "impurities" from the individual's mind. Since the individual's experience of self-discovery is mystifying and intangible, the best way to describe this abstract experience is with the metaphor of *chemia*, a process that activates a chemical change in bodies both physically and metaphorically. Alchemy itself becomes a metaphor for the transformation of change within the theater/vessel in the brain, one's private world of thoughts.

Shakespeare disembeds¹⁶³ the language of alchemy out of its privileged arena of learned philosophers and disseminates the rich symbolic meanings and emblems to a wider, mixed audience. In this way, Shakespeare acts as the mediator between the "scientists" and the "groundlings"; and for those with either a basic or thorough knowledge of alchemy, Shakespeare illustrates that the spiritual side of alchemy can give

¹⁶³ I use this discourse analysis term to describe the process by which ideas that develop in one social domain are detached from that particular context and become available to flow into others. In this framework, alchemical jargon and its practice are allowed to flow from the laboratory into the minds of lay people. See Fairclough.

people the philosophical tools for becoming a self-determining being. I assert that Shakespeare's appropriation of alchemical imagery and concepts helped him create a framework to unify the humanist notion of self-fashioning and the Hermetic conviction in human capacity for higher consciousness. Shakespeare's incorporation of alchemical language—specifically the lexical alchemical features of “sulfurous,” “thought-executing fires,” the “wheel of fire,” and “tears” that “scald like molten lead”—provokes people to embody the alchemical process: a process that compels individuals to work consciously in stirring¹⁶⁴ the baser aspects of their thoughts and actions toward perfection of being.

The Hermetic Bearings on Renaissance Alchemical Tracts

Charles Nicholl in *The Chemical Theatre* presents a thorough study of alchemical tracts that may have influenced Shakespeare and other contemporary playwrights and poets. He draws parallels between alchemical symbols in literary works and philosophical tracts from the early seventeenth century.¹⁶⁵ According to Nicholl, two texts seem to be more influential because of their popularity in England: Roger Bacon's *The Mirror of Alchimy* printed in 1597 in English translation from his original Latin text *Speculum Alchemiae*, and George Ripley's *The Compound of Alchymy* first circulated in manuscript and then printed in London in 1591.¹⁶⁶ The significance of Bacon's alchemical text is his emphasis on alchemy as a science worthy of study. For in the early

¹⁶⁴ I believe that “stirring” here is an appropriate word to exemplify the metaphorical/spiritual process of achieving higher consciousness, which is symbolically illustrated in terms of the alchemist in the laboratory mixing and stirring the agents of salt, sulfur, and mercury in the alchemical vessel. I use this term in the same metaphorical sense as Lear: “stirs these Daughters' Hearts / Against their Father” (2.2.457).

¹⁶⁵ Examples of the philosophical tracts that Nicholl incorporates in his study: Bacon's *The Mirror of Alchimy* (1597), Ripley's *The Compound of Alchymy* (1592), Dorn's *Theatrum Chemicum* (1602) collected by Ashmole, Valentine's *Triumphant Chariot of Antimony* (1604), and Tymme's *Chymical Physicke* (1605), originally written by Joseph Du Chesne.

¹⁶⁶ Roger Bacon is the same chemist that Robert Greene, an older contemporary of Shakespeare's, wrote about in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* in 1589.

seventeenth century, many writers debated over the subject of alchemy as a legitimate science, as we see in the literary world reflected in Greene and Jonson.

Ripley (1415-1490) also greatly contributed to the revival of alchemy in the fifteenth century. He wrote his works in verse rather than in prose and took more of an allegorical rather than laboratorial approach to the alchemical process. Ripley figures the alchemical process as a journey one needs to make into the castle of wisdom, describing the castle as “round as any bell,” which connects his alchemical process to the circular hermetic vessel and the circular journey toward the center gate of the castle.¹⁶⁷ I propose that Ripley’s illustration of alchemy, as a symbolic journey one takes to gain wisdom and perfect the soul in the inner sanctum of a castle (the soul), is reflected in Lear’s journey toward becoming “an O without a figure.” This “O” is similar to the symbol of the ouroboros,¹⁶⁸ the ancient symbol of a snake swallowing its own tail and forming a circle. The symbol of the ouroboros represents the soul becoming self-reflective and whole. In order to understand Ripley’s text, one needs to understand how to “decode” the meaning behind the symbols. Yet, Shakespeare’s audience does not need to have specific knowledge of occult metaphors and practices; although Shakespeare incorporates such alchemical metaphors as the “O” (the ouroboros) and “sulfurous and thought executing fires,” the meaning of the play (how one can participate in the process of training the soul to become a self-determining being) can still be understood without these symbols.

¹⁶⁷ See Ripley.

¹⁶⁸ The ouroboros is traced back to ancient Egypt, which in turn passed to Phoenician and then to Greek philosophers. Plato describes a self-eating, circular being as the first living thing in the universe that was self-sufficient and immortal. Christianity adopted the ouroboros as a symbol of the limited confines of the material world to illustrate the transitory nature of the “worldly existence.” In Stephanos of Alexandria’s 2nd-century *De Chrysopoeia*, the ouroboros is depicted as enclosing the words “hen to pan” which means “one is the all,” the philosophical/theological Hermetic belief that all of life is connected in the One (116). Sir Thomas Browne alludes to the ouroboros in the conclusion of *The Garden of Cyrus* (1658) as a symbol of the circular nature and unity of existence.

Shakespeare's "O without a figure" finds its counterpart in not only Ripley's "castle" and the symbol of the ancient ouroboros, but also in the shape of the Globe Theater itself. The Globe Theater serves as the "container" that propels audience members to become self-reflective. Alchemists used the ouroboros to symbolize the alchemical process of transmutation, illustrating that an individual was this snake that slew himself and then brought himself back to life. This act of "slaying" the self is the process of ridding the mind and soul of its impurities (its degradations) in order to vivify individuals back to their divine natures. Through the purgation of emotions and the coming in contact with other points of view, the theater enables audience members to in effect "slay" themselves and bring themselves back to life. Depending on the subject matter presented, the theater facilitates mental and spiritual transformation. I argue that *Lear* presents a spiritual message that engages audience members to in turn think about their own lives. When audience members play back images from the play in the theater of their own minds, they can apply the philosophical messages to put into practice the Hermetic trope of self-mastery. The goal of this Hermetic paradigm is to become the self-reflective ouroboros, the "O without a figure," or Ripley's self-sustaining "castle," all of which are symbols for the self-determining soul in the Hermetic discourses. The image of the spinning wheel—the "O" or the ouroboros spinning in place—is symbolic of the soul, which deliberately generates revolutions of itself in order to become a self-determining being.

Symbolically, the theater itself is the vessel where audience members (metals) undergo various types of transformations in thinking and feeling via actors' performances (the agents of sulfur and mercury in the alchemists' language). The theater can be seen

as the round wheel upon which audience members undergo transformation of thought and feeling as they watch a world in microcosm performed before their eyes. Bettina Knapp further illustrates that while the alchemist transmutes his metals, the dramatist “projects his yearning and fantasies onto his plays and in so doing alters their form and reality” (1). Just as the alchemist achieves the transmuting one element to another, so too does the dramatist undergo a similar process of transmutation: “from the uncreated idea which lies buried within his unconscious to the externalized incarnation which is his play” (2). As the alchemist transmutes metals in his *magnum opus*, so too does the dramatist create a type of transformation in an attempt to affect a Great Work of his own.¹⁶⁹

At this point, it is advantageous to outline the Hermetic texts’ specific alchemical argument. The central source that informed Renaissance alchemical tracts was the Hermetic text *Tablet*, which alchemists believed contained the instructions for the steps of the alchemical process, both practical and metaphorical.¹⁷⁰ Many philosophers made commentaries and translations of the *Tablet*: Albertus Magnus, Johannes Trithemius and Michael Maier in Germany and Roger Bacon and Isaac Newton in England. Many

¹⁶⁹ The alchemical tracts discuss the alchemical process as follows: a metal such as lead is put in a vessel, usually glass, and then placed on fire. Elements of sulfur, mercury, and salt are added to the metal in the vessel at the proper moments, stirring the elements in a circular motion. The fire waxes and wanes according to the opportune moments for the heating and cooling processes. Sulfur and mercury extract the impurities from the metal, enabling the transformation from lead to gold. Alchemists projected human characteristics onto the substance involved in the process. Sulfur was masculine, active, hot, fixed, and corresponded to the soul. Mercury was feminine, passive, cold, volatile, and corresponded to the spirit. Thus, the alchemists’ world was one of metaphor. The principles of sulfur, mercury, and salt corresponded to the body, soul of human beings, nature, the archetypal world, the microcosm, and the macrocosm. The alchemists’ ultimate aim was to use these metaphors as tools to affect mental or physical change. Since everything emerged from God and returned to God after death, they sought to mirror this natural circular process of death and rebirth in their physical or spiritual alchemical pursuits.

¹⁷⁰ Although Nicholl acknowledges that Renaissance alchemical texts drew their language and philosophy from the Hermetic texts, most prominently the *Tablet*, as the foundation for their art of alchemy, he neglects to underscore the similarity in language and meaning between the Hermetic texts and Renaissance alchemical tracts; and in turn, his study on the alchemical influence on Shakespeare’s *Lear* is thus not entirely complete. Thus, in this chapter I will illustrate that the play also incorporates the other two components of the Hermetic philosophy: astrology and theurgy.

English alchemists turned to Bacon's Hermetic translation to help inform their philosophical texts on alchemy.

The main alchemical argument in the *Tablet* is the theory of "as above so below": "That which is beneath is like that which is aboue: and that which / is aboue, is like that which is beneath, to / worke the miracles of one thing."¹⁷¹ The corporeal world reflects the incorporeal world as fluidity of spirit and dense matter work in union, creating a circular journey of new life, which is visually echoed in the symbol of the ouroboros. In this Hermetic alchemical philosophy, spiritual manifestation occurs through material support and in turn, matter exists because of incorporeal nature. This is described in the *Tablet*: "His [God's] force and power is perfect, if it / be turned into earth." The Hermetic argument here is that mankind can harness the powers of the incorporeal and the corporeal, of spirit and matter ("receiueth the power of the superiours and inferiourus"), to have knowledge of the unification of spirit and matter in creation (to "haue the glorie of the whole / worlde") in order to create "adaptations" of things corporeal. Mankind can harness the circular motions of things (generation, putrefaction, regeneration) as witnessed in nature in order to make matter imitate the perfection of nature and even God himself, for "as all things haue / proceeded from one, by the meditation of one, so / all things haue sprung from this one thing [the unification of spirit and matter] by / adaptation."

The *Tablet* further describes that individuals should perform the alchemical process of *solve et coagula* (dissolve into a liquid and then coagulate back into a solid) in order to create new adaptations and changes in spirit and matter, which is described in

¹⁷¹ This translation of the *Tablet* is taken from Bacon's *The Mirror*. See Appendix I. Since I am quoting from Bacon's version of Hortulanus' translation of the *Tablet*, many words have Renaissance spellings.

another Hermetic text as “making again of all things good, a holy and awestrking restoration of all nature” (*Asc* III, 138). The *solve et coagula* process is described in an esoteric manner, equating liquidity to the heavenly realm and solidity to the earthly realm: “it / ascendethe from the Earth into heaven: and / again it descendeth into the earth, and / receiue the power of the superiours and inferiours.” The text argues that mankind should perform this circular process of transmutation with deliberate attention and awareness: “Thou shalt separate the / earth from the fire, the thinne from the thicke, / and that gently with great discretion.” Once individuals have been able to make adaptations of both matter (corporeal objects) and spirit (their thoughts), once matter is turned into spirit and spirit turned back into matter, (once they can “overcome euery subtle thing, / and pearce through euery solide thing”), then and only then can they “haue the glorie of the whole / worlde” and obtain a higher consciousness to realize “the mightie power of all / power.” Once individuals have attained the theurgical step of obtaining a higher consciousness, “All obscuritie therefore shall flie away” and they will no longer be bound on Fortuna’s wheel, but rather they will have the means to fashion their own thoughts and actions. The words, “Here shall be maruailous / adaptations, whereof this is the meane. Therefore / am I called Hermes Trismegistus, or thrice / great Interpreter: hauing three parts of the philosophy / of the whole world,” illustrate that Hermes in the *Tablet* has given mankind the means for manifesting the three-part philosophy for achieving self-mastery.

Alchemical tracts of the 14th through the 16th centuries appropriated the “as above, so below” and *solve et coagula* concepts from the *Tablet* where Hermes Trismegistus’ words, “it ascends from earth to heaven and then returns back to the earth,” reveal the

transmutation process as a circular path of joining matter and spirit. During the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, the concept of a circular journey was rooted in the image of the wheel of fortune. Yet, this medieval image of the wheel of fortune transmitted the conviction that humans did not have the power or responsibility to control circumstances in their lives. In opposition to the medieval view of Fortuna's wheel, Renaissance alchemists appropriated the Hermetic view that human beings did not have to be subjected to Destiny, and thus they transformed the symbol of Fortuna's Wheel into a symbolic apparatus used in the perfection process of the self.

Transformation in Meaning for the Symbol of the Wheel

The symbol of the wheel underwent significant changes from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The wheel in classical literature could be either favorable or disadvantageous while medieval depiction of Fortuna was primarily used for religious instruction to remind people of the temporality of earthly existence. For instance, in the morality play *Everyman* (1495), Fortune's wheel spins Everyman low and it is only through good works that he may secure a place in God's kingdom. The wheel in the Middle Ages signified the inevitable turning of Fortuna's wheel and the uncontrollable and unchangeable tragic end for the individual. 6th-century Roman philosopher Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy* was the major source for the medieval view of the wheel, which depicted the turn of Fortuna as inevitable and providential. Boccaccio used Boethius' text as the philosophical basis for his 14th-century *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (Concerning the Falls of Illustrious Men), a collection of moral stories about major figures who fell not by their own fault but rather by the capriciousness of Fortune. Boccaccio's *De casibus* became a tradition, which influenced such writers as Chaucer,

Lydgate, Laurent de Premierfait, and Shakespeare. In classical tragic literature, tragedy was the result of individual action, assigning direct responsibility for failure to the individual rather than the uncontrollable capriciousness of Fortuna. In the Renaissance, these classical ideas of individual power began to supplant the medieval belief in uncontrollable nature.

In the *De casibus* tradition, the stories about the fall of a character from a high position to a low one were meant to teach lessons on caution and humility. Lydgate's 15th-century *The Fall of Princes* is a warning to princes to obey the advice of older experts rather than to be influenced by sycophants.¹⁷² As a continuation of the *Fall of Princes*, Baldwin and Ferrers' edition of the 16th-century *Mirror for Magistrates*¹⁷³ depicts the protagonists as responsible for their own falls and puts forth a strong message to "punish" one's own sinful thoughts and acts. Shakespeare's tragedies reflect the theme of life as a pattern controlled by Fortune. *Richard II* depicts the same view of the fickle king who listens to sycophants, as depicted in *The Mirror*. In *Henry V*, Pistol and Fluellen talk about Fortune as blind and inconstant. Yet, it is my argument that *Lear* presents yet another view of fortune, one that includes the Hermetic argument that individuals can gain access to a mode of existence outside of Fortune's control through a self-discovery process in which they learn how to embody their divine essence. And

¹⁷² Lydgate's translation of Boccaccio's *Fall of Princes* recounts the fall of Roboam, son of Solomon, who lost his kingdom because he was interested in flatterers rather than listening to senior advisors. God allowed the Egyptians to attack his kingdom because of this bad government.

¹⁷³ Most of the poems take the form of ghosts examining themselves and their deeds in front of a mirror. This was a common trope in the Middle Ages; many works were presented as a "speculum," a "mirror." See for instance, Vincent de Beauvais' *Speculum Maius*. The title refers to holding up a mirror to famous people to help those in high positions learn from their errors.

therefore it is important to look beyond the *De casibus* tradition, to see the occult tradition's view of the wheel of fortune.¹⁷⁴

In the Hermetic mode of thinking, alchemy was the first stage toward theurgy (the purification of one's soul was necessary before one could fully embody his divine nature in the physical form). The philosophy of alchemy became a powerful metaphor for individuals to affect transformation of mind and soul. In his allegorical approach to alchemy, Ripley uses the terms, "the Wheel of our Philosophy" and "the Wheel of Elements" as substitutes for being on Fortuna's wheel. These terms promote the idea that individuals have individual agency in creating change as opposed to the medieval view of the wheel as Fortune's control over their fate. The "wheel of elements" represents the stirring the elements of earth, air, fire, and water and hot, cold, dry, and moist within individuals' body and mind. When they have become base because of their dissolute thoughts and actions, then being (metaphorically) *on* the wheel of elements, the wheel of alchemical philosophy, will help them attain spiritual purification.

I contend that the concept of Lear's "wheel of fire" (4.7.48) reflects the metaphorical tool that Renaissance alchemist Ripley presents as the "chair of fire." Both metaphors of an apparatus of fire are symbolic images that represent individuals undergoing the process of soul purification. Both symbols call to mind the already understood concept of a king sitting upon a throne at the top of Fortuna's wheel about to fall to the bottom; yet, the symbols draw attention to the element of fire, which stirs up

¹⁷⁴ *Lear* affords a better analysis of the Hermetic mode of thinking more than any of his other tragedies as, I contend, it works to redefine the role of Fortuna for humanity. Beyond the *De casibus* tradition where mankind's life is governed by blind Fortuna, Shakespeare presents a view of characters, namely Cordelia and Kent, who have been able to embody the trope of self-mastery to such a degree that they no longer are subject to fortune's control; they have performed the Hermetic goal of surpassing fortune's control (Cordelia's ability to "out-frown false Fortune's frowns") by mystically understanding the reality of the union of spirit and matter. Thus, they are "living examples" of the Hermetic belief that individuals can work to create their own salvation.

the elements in the alchemist's vessel (or an individual's mind) and burns away the impurities. Although Shakespeare does not appropriate Ripley's exact phrasing from the alchemical language, the similarities in imagery are enough to decode an influence from the entire register¹⁷⁵ of Hermetic alchemical philosophy.

The term, Horizontal Intertextuality, which describes how texts build on other texts with which they are related sequentially, helps to establish the action of how writers pick up on other writers' words and phrases and re-use them.¹⁷⁶ Shakespeare echoes Ripley's expansion of the metaphor of the wheel to illustrate both that the blind goddess Fortuna turns Lear upon the wheel and that he is on the wheel of life—the circular journey of birth, growth, death, putrefaction, and rebirth. Shakespeare has Lear exclaim that he is on a “wheel of fire” when he is at the height of his madness in the elemental storm in Act 3. This reflects Ripley's language of the “wheel of elements” or the “chair of fire” that each “body,” each metal, must undergo transformation in a fire of purification. Shakespeare borrows the alchemical language belonging to the register of the philosophical tracts of chemistry—written by experts within the field of science and the occult who had knowledge of alchemical jargon—to illustrate how transmutation of an individual could be performed.

Shakespeare's deliberate use of alchemical imagery helps to describe the process of interior change that Lear must undergo. As a tool to heal and transform, the alchemical metaphor verges on the borders of organic magic, affecting the audience in a

¹⁷⁵ I use “register” in a broad sense to refer to the entire system of the Hermetic mode of thinking which includes the philosophical tenets and methods for putting those ideas in action. I use “register” here as a “container of ideas,” “a body of philosophy.”

¹⁷⁶ See Johnstone.

deep emotive sense. In an act of hybridization,¹⁷⁷ Shakespeare creates a pattern, which connects two social registers of purification, from the Christian mindset (commonly understood by the public) and from the philosopher's mindset (not commonly understood by the public). By connecting these two social registers, Shakespeare only needs to capture the essence of the experience of alchemy and not the philosophical tracts' entire description of the laboratory practice. Since the theater was a meeting ground for a variety of people, accessible to illiterate and the learned simultaneously, playwrights (Shakespeare as the most successful) needed to simplify their content to ensure that the *core* of their message was transmitted to a wider audience. As Sidney illustrates in *Defence of Poesy* (1595), poets (and thus playwrights) are not constrained to the world of facts like historians but rather can depict images of virtue and vice. In this way, Shakespeare only needs to depict "images" or aspects of traditions, such as the Hermetic, to illustrate a particular philosophical message.

The performative/spectator dynamic of the theater encourages audiences to become self-reflective. To get people to "apply" the general process/message of the Hermetic discourse, it would be disadvantageous to burden the actions and language of the play with technical jargon or complex symbology. Furthermore, Shakespeare would not want to be too closely tied to traditions and their texts given the context of his times where Reformers rendered all textual authority problematic.¹⁷⁸ Along these lines, any references to Hermes, specific Hermetic texts in circulation during his time, would pull

¹⁷⁷ I use the term here to refer to the act of blurring boundaries between one mode of thinking and another in order to create a mix or convergence of ideas into one system or practice.

¹⁷⁸ As Rackin illustrates, Reformers wanted to "restore Christianity to its original pure form" and in this attempt, they rendered all textual authority problematic. From this standpoint, the Bible no longer was "taken as simply 'given,' as the eternally present word of God; rather it came to be seen as a historical document, the product of a particular time and place" (1). The Bible then became a written imitation or copy of the presence of God's word. In this vein, the production of Shakespeare's version of *Lear* on stage becomes the imitation or model of the living Hermetic philosophy.

audiences farther from the *heart* of the message; for they would concentrate instead on the historical controversy surrounding the Hermetic tradition rather than its most important message: the trope of self-mastery.

The First Constituent of the Hermetic Philosophy: Alchemy

Lear's transformation from king to beggar is comparable to the alchemical transmutation of metals. The circular pattern, described as the Wheel of Fortune or the Wheel of Fire in the play, resembles the alchemists' emphasis on circular movement in the *magnum opus*. The circular process in the play carries both king and kingdom through death to new life. Lear's fall from his position as king begins the fall and ruin of the whole kingdom. When Cordelia "allows not nature more than nature need[s],"¹⁷⁹ by saying "nothing" when her father requests her to make a lavish display of her love for him, she sets into motion the *magnum opus* that inevitably needs to take place in Lear's mind: an alteration and transformation of his base thoughts of hubris and aggrandizement. Lear's hubris, demanding from his daughters "Which of you shall we say doth love us most," propels him to fall subject to Fortuna's Wheel, the symbol that Kent, Edmund, and Lear mention throughout the play (1.1.51).¹⁸⁰ At this point in the play, Lear is unable to control his own fate and thus is subject to Fortuna's control.

At the moment the wheel of fortune begins to move Lear from his position on top toward the bottom, Lear states, "Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower. / For, by the *sacred radiance of the sun, / The mysteries of Hecate and the night, / By all the operation of the orbs / From whom we do exist and cease to be, / Here I disclaim all my paternal*

¹⁷⁹ Lear's words (2.2.449).

¹⁸⁰ Kent: "Fortune, good night. Smile once more; turn they wheel" (2.2.176); Edmund: "The wheel is come full circle" (5.3.177); Lear: "Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound / Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears / Do scald like molten lead" (4.7.48-9).

care” (1.1.107-113, my emphasis). With these words, Lear foreshadows his banishment, declaring the stars and planets control his movements. Similarly, Ripley explains that within the process of transmutation, the “moisture of the Moon” and the “temperate heat of the Sun” are needed, along with “perfect knowledge of all the poles, which are in the heavens” (44). Renaissance alchemists took their cues from their inspirational Hermetic source, the *Tablet*, which illustrates that the science of metaphorical alchemical transformation within the human mind is similar to change and regeneration that occurs within the entire globe of the earth. The text explains, “His father is the sun, his mother is the Moone, the wind bore it in his belly. The earth is / his nurse,” which illustrate that all earthly change is influenced by the operations of the earth, the sun, and the moon. Lear’s alchemical language sets the stage for his journey into self-purification as he reveals that his actions will be influenced by the direction of the sun, by Hecate—the goddess of witchcraft and the moon—by night, and by the influence of the planets and stars. Hecate was depicted in Greek vase paintings as holding twin torches to symbolize her role in guiding Demeter to find Persephone. In this facet, Hecate was the goddess of the crossroads that guided people on their paths. Lear calls upon this guidance in his journey into self-discovery. Lear’s words “Let it be so” work to affirm or fix this process of self-discovery into existence, a process reflected in the biblical word “amen.”¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ “So be it” has two nuanced meanings: sealing or affirming the prayer or thought into existence and illustrating that something is the way it is because it embodies the truth of the situation. The origin of “amen” is the Hebrew “aman,” which means firm, confirmed, reliable, and faithful. The Talmud teaches that “Amen” is an acronym for “ne’eman,” “God trustworthy King.” Matthew 3:15 depicts “amen” in terms of “truth”: “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness”; similarly, Isaiah 65:16 depicts the same meaning of “truth” in “God of the Amen”—God of truth. Furthermore, “amen” is depicted as “truth” in Revelations 3:4 when Jesus is called the Amen, the embodiment of God. This is why Jesus says to the disciples, “I am the truth.” “Amen” is translated in the Greek Old Testament as “Let it be” or “So be it.” The King James Version states, “verily” or “truly.”

At this point in Lear's mind, his pride restricts him from seeing the potential destruction he is causing by dividing the kingdom and banishing his youngest daughter; thus the symbol of Fortuna's Wheel is seminal in depicting Lear's status as being worked upon by the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (in Hamlet's words 3.1.60), without knowledge of what will happen to him and without the power to create change on his own. Yet, as Lear undergoes significant changes in the play, the symbol of the wheel is more accurately described as the alchemists' symbolic apparatus that enables transmutation. As early as Act 1, Scene 4, Lear has a glimpse into his destructive actions and he tells the knight, "Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception. I have perceived a most faint neglect of late, which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity, than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness" (1.4.66-70). Lear recognizes that he has given birth to his deposed state; yet, he is not fully aware of the ramifications of his actions and thus he states "I will look further into 't"—the verbal cues that Lear is about to begin his metaphorical transformation from base (controlled by hubris) to pure (higher awareness) (1.4.70).

Just as metal is stripped of its surface qualities via chemical agents of sulfur and mercury, Lear is stripped of his surface identity as a king by his acidic daughters, Regan and Goneril. At this point in his exile, Lear asks the Fool "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" to which the Fool responds "Lear's shadow" (1.4.227, 228).¹⁸² The process of becoming his shadow is symbolic of the beginning stages of the alchemical *solve et*

¹⁸² It is interesting to note that in the 1594 version of the play, Lear says to himself what the Fool states in Shakespeare's version. Compare Lear's "think me but a shadow of my self" and the Fool's "Lear's shadow." I argue that Shakespeare has the Fool state this concept to Lear to illustrate the Hermetic idea that individuals need "guides" to help them on their journey of self-mastery. Furthermore, I argue that the absence of the Fool after Act 3 Scene 6 is representative of Lear no longer needing the Fool as his guide. Of course we should take into consideration that if the same actor played the Fool and Cordelia, then Shakespeare could not let the Fool appear on the stage at the same time as Cordelia.

coagula process (dissolving matter into spirit) described in the *Tablet*. For in becoming his “shadow,” Lear metaphorically has been dissolved into the “liquid state,” a step in the process that allows the “spirit” (Lear’s higher consciousness) to begin its transformation. “Shadow” and “liquid” have similar connotations when we view “shadow” as the intangible shape of an object/individual and “liquid” as the more intangible form of an object’s solid form. In this way, in order for Lear to gain access to his higher consciousness, he must first become “liquefied,” he must first metaphorically boil away the theoretical body or veil that keeps him from being aware of soul activity. Lear’s “shadow” can be seen as his astral body form,¹⁸³ the ethereal body/vehicle of the soul. In focusing on the immortal aspect of himself instead of his dense physical body, Lear can then be able to attain awareness of the soul’s activity and purification.

One of the first positive results in Lear’s *solve et coagula* process happens when he explains to Albany that his own “fault” caused his downfall: “Oh most small fault,” “like an *engine*, wrenched my frame of nature / From the fixed place, drew from my heart all love, / And added to the gall. Oh Lear, Lear, Lear! / Beat at this *Gate* that let thy folly in / And thy dear judgment out!” (1.4.265-271, my emphasis). Here Lear beats at his head in recognition that his thoughts have propelled him to perform self-indulgent actions, which in turn caused his depraved state. Yet, bound to the “engine,” the

¹⁸³ The astral body or the subtle body is the intermediate between the intelligent soul and the physical body. When the spiritual traveler leaves his physical body, he travels in the subtle body into higher realms. Cicero’s Dream of Scipio in *De Republic* depicts the movement of the subtle body in the “apparitional experience.” Plato’s Myth of Er in *The Republic* relates that human beings were composed of the mortal body, immortal reason, and intermediate spirit (the astral body). Proclus is credited as the first to speak of subtle planes. He posited that human beings have two subtle bodies that are intermediates between the rational soul and the physical body: 1) the astral vehicle, the immortal vessel of the soul and 2) the pneuma vehicle, the mortal vital breath. Furthermore, Ireneas and Augustine believed that a soul has the same form as the physical body and only differed in substance. “Astral” means literally “of the stars.” In Sufism, the astral body is talked about as the “most sacred body” or “the supracelestial body.” In Taoism and Vajrayan, it is called the “diamond body.” In Tibetan Buddhism, it is called the “light body” or “the rainbow body.” In Kriya Yoga, it is called the “body of bliss.” Finally, in Hermetism, it is called “the immortal body.”

symbolic alchemical apparatus, he is being initiated into the *solve et coagula* process—the process that will shift Lear from his “*fixed* state,” from his corrupt nature which is focused on the corporeal world of desire, to a “*fluid* state” which will allow him to become aware of his higher, god-like nature.

At this stage in his transformation, Lear tells Goneril and Albany that even though he is his “shadow” in “liquefied” form, he will once again regain his identity after he advances on the alchemical wheel: “Thou shalt find / That I’ll resume the shape which thou dost think / I have cast off for ever” (1.4.307-9). The shape that people think he has cast off forever is his true identity as a king over himself, not just a king reigning over the land of Britain. This is what Cordelia refers to when she states that she is working to restore Lear’s “right”; she attempts to help him restore his true identity as a spiritual self (4.4.28). Upon the final rotation of the metaphorical alchemical wheel, Lear will finally be purged of “the foul disease” of his base actions, which will then enable him to become his own “physician” as described by Kent (1.1.166). Yet until this revolution occurs, Lear must reflect the alchemical process, which strips metals of their surface qualities and impurities. He must become his shadow, he must be reduced to “nothing,” an “O without a figure” (1.4.190). By becoming his “shadow” and an “O without a figure,” Lear is able to get closer to embodying his true self as a spiritual being. “Shadow” refers to Lear’s spiritual body, his astral body, in the same way that the “O” refers to the symbol of the ouroboros, or the individual’s true essence or identity. Lear’s loss of his corporeal kingly identity reflects the alchemical process of boiling metals from their solid state to their liquid state in order to restore metals to their pure form—the alchemical process described in the *Tablet* as “separate the / earth from the fire, the thinne from the thicke.”

It is this loss of his corporeal kingly identity that precipitates being able to gain awareness of his higher self.

In Act 3 Scene 2, Lear begins the metaphorical alchemical process of purgation, where fire boils away impurities from metals, when he states, “Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow! / You cataracts and hurricanoes,” “You sulfurous and thought-executing fires, / Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts, / Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder, / Strike flat the thick rotundity o’ th’ world! / Crack nature’s molds, all germens spill at once / That makes ingrateful man!” (3.2.1-2, 4-9). The fires are the symbolic “Vaunt-couriers,” the forerunners to the thunderbolts in the elemental storm (3.2.5), which are caused by the storm in Lear’s mind: “This tempest in my mind” (3.4.12). Thus the tempest in Lear’s mind caused the elemental storm, and inversely, the elemental storm caused the tempest in Lear’s mind. Shakespeare’s literary parallel between Lear’s madness and nature’s storm echoes the Hermetic connection between the incorporeal and corporeal, between spirit and matter, and between thought and body. The *Tablet* states, “It / ascendeth from the Earth into heauen: and / againe it descendeth into the earth, and / receiue the power of the superiours and inferiours.” Lear’s “thought-executing fires” then become symbolic representations of his base thoughts undergoing purification via fire in the vessel of his brain.

Shakespeare has Lear make sense of the world and his situation through the metaphor of alchemy. During his symbolic alchemical purification process, Lear commands the “thunderbolts” and “thunder,” representatives of the chemical reactions caused by fire, sulfur, and mercury in the alchemical vessel, to “Crack nature’s molds, all germens spill at once” (3.2.8). Lear’s words explain the Hermetic process of piercing

“through euery solide thing,” to create “maruailous / adaptations” by combining “germens,” seeds from the “solid” (matter / “inferiorus”) and seeds from the “subtle” (spirit / “superiours”) (*Tablet*). In other words, the Hermetic philosophy illustrates the *solve et coagula* method as a necessary process of unifying matter and spirit, a process where mankind achieves a higher awareness and learns how to embody godly thoughts in the corporeal world.

Ripley reflects this Hermetic *solve et coagula* process when he states, “And Sublimation we make for three causes, / The first cause is, to make the body spiritual, / The second is, that the spirit may be corporeal / And become fixed with it and consubstantial, / The third cause is, that from its filthy original / It may be cleansed, and its saltiness sulphurous, / May be diminished in it, which is infectious” (*Tablet*). The metaphor of Lear’s “sulfurous” thoughts within his “Sulfurous Mind” (thoughts that act like they are executing fires within his mind), conjures powerful images in the minds of some playgoers. Lear’s words model to his audience a generalized description of the alchemical process of regeneration. They model that before perfection of the self can be achieved, one must first undergo a series of cleansing processes, metaphorically represented as undergoing heat or fire to burn out the impurities.

Directly after Lear invokes his sulfurous thoughts and the elemental storm to perform their purifying processes, Lear begins to look inward. Kent leads Lear to a hovel for protection from the storm, saying, “Some Friendship will it lend you ’gainst the tempest” (3.2.62). Kent’s actions of helping Lear to shelter him from the continuous rage of the storm reflect the philosophy in the Hermetic texts: “Suffer not yourselves then to be borne along down stream by the strong current, but avail yourselves of a backflow,

those of you who are able to reach the haven, and cast anchor there, and seek a guide to lead you to the door of the house of knowledge. There you will find the bright light which is pure from darkness” (CH VII, 71). In response to Kent’s kind act, Lear begins to see beyond the dark night of the storm, both in his mind and in nature, and states, “My wits begin to turn” (3.2.67). Here Lear’s words represent the Hermetic principle of availing oneself of a backflow instead of blindly being carried along the stream of one’s life. Instead of being selfish, Lear begins to look beyond his unfortunate state and into another’s and says to the Fool, “Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart / That’s sorry yet for thee” (3.2.72-3). Lear has gained insight; he found the “bright light” out of his “dark” (selfish) and confused state by becoming consciousness of others’ troubles.

Kent becomes Lear’s guide who leads him to the precipice of the “house of knowledge”; by helping Lear think beyond his desires, Kent models for Lear how one may begin to listen to his own inner knowledge. Similarly, Edgar as the Bedlam beggar functions as Lear’s guide, as he provided Lear with a living example of poverty to which he attempts to mirror as he strips his clothes, to be like Poor Tom, “unaccommodated man,” a “poor, bare, forked animal” (3.4.27). This action illustrates Lear’s entry into a new stage of self-awareness as he begins to realize that a king is merely a man, and that all the attributes of kingship, such as material riches and the pursuit of flattery, prevent him from attaining spiritual knowledge of love and humility.

Thus, in order to become conscious of his true self as a spiritual being, Lear needs to remove himself from the world of objects. This is similar to the Burckhardian argument that in distancing themselves from the external world, Renaissance individuals gained a new sense of autonomy. For in investing too much attention on material

possessions and status markers, individuals become blinded to their true power and identity as they rely on the changing material world to provide them with personality and agency. Margreta de Grazia argues, “removing what a person *has* simultaneously takes away what a person *is*” (21, my emphasis). Yet, in the Hermetic philosophy, “having” material possessions is not tantamount to “being”; for “being” is the true essence of a person, one’s inner sense of self unencumbered by external influence. Thus, individuals should use external objects to help them in self-discovery rather than let external objects define who they are. In this process, individuals need to be conscious of how they interact with the external world so that they do not let it have power over them. For in limiting their vision to the material world, individuals become shaped and transformed by the physical world rather than using their own inner source of power to shape and transform their surroundings. De Grazia argues that material possessions are “necessary for upholding social and personal identity” (24). As individuals live in the physical world, material possessions are indeed necessary to have experiences; yet, if individuals allow possessions to define them, they become, in a sense, non-beings because the material world is illusory and transient. Thus, as the Hermetic mentality promotes, Lear needs to privilege his own inner knowledge over external promises of wealth and fame.

While Kent is able to lead Lear to the hovel (the “house of knowledge”), Lear is the only one who is able to take the steps toward manifesting his inner wisdom. In the next scene, Lear realizes he has neglected to take care of the people in his kingdom, especially the poor beggars:

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe’er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? Oh, I have ta’en

Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just. (3.4.28-36)

Lear charges himself to take the medicine he deserves so that he may understand how the poor souls of his kingdom feel. “Take physic, pomp” is the familiar language from Luke 4:23, “Physician, heal thyself.” The inclusion of “physic” here does not represent actual herbal medicine for the body, but rather spiritual medicine for the soul. At the beginning of the play, Kent explains that Lear “killed” his inner physician, his inner wisdom, when he banished Cordelia in Act 1. Yet, after being led back “to the door of the house of knowledge,” symbolized by Kent’s action of leading Lear to the hovel, Lear begins to embody the Hermetic ideal of taking action to perfect that which is imperfect (CH VII, 71). For by taking “physic,” doses of spiritual awareness, Lear shows he is becoming aware of his power to shape and define himself rather than being controlled by fortune.

In addition, Lear’s act of stripping off his garments, “Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here” when he sees bare and degenerate Poor Tom, is symbolic of Lear’s desire to tear away all the elements that have blinded him from seeing that he is to blame for the destruction of his kingdom (3.4.107). Here Lear’s garments become representative of his sight, which have covered/veiled his ability to see the role he has played in the destruction of his kingdom. This connection of garments with metaphorical blindness reflects the rhetorical features in the Hermetic texts where Hermes states to Tat, “But first you must tear off this garment which you wear, this cloak of darkness, this web of ignorance, this (prop) of evil, this bond of corruption, this living death...Such is the garment in which *you* have clothed yourself; and it grips you to itself and holds you down, that you may not look upward and behold the beauty of the Truth,” the knowledge

of the higher self and God (CH VII, 71, my emphasis). By focusing on material pursuits, one sees life through the lens of the material body, which becomes a “bond of corruption.” The body then becomes a “garment” that restricts one from hearing “the things [he] ought to hear of” and from seeing “the things [he] ought to see” (CH VII, 71). Throughout his alchemical transformation in the play, Lear reveals that he is beginning to comprehend his ignorance and he takes measures to remedy his errors. His act of taking off his clothes symbolizes the stripping away of his ignorance. Furthermore, the gentlemen’s act, of putting “fresh garments” on Lear in Act 4, symbolizes that Lear’s transformation process is near completion (4.7.23). Lear has nearly come full circle to regain the shape that Goneril and Albany thought he had “cast off forever” (1.4.309).

Lear illustrates that he is beginning to understand the reasons for his transformation of mind; for it is “by transmutation [that] things made are purged of evil” (CH XVI, 107). When Lear awakens to see Cordelia, he explains that he has been bound “Upon a wheel of fire,” where his “own tears / Do scald like molten lead” (4.7.48-9). The imagery here elicits an alchemical theme rather than Christian ideas of hell. In this alchemical imagery, the wheel of fire conjures mental purgatorial afflictions where an individual experiences torment within the mind, similar to the afflictions Lear experiences in his “mad scene” in the elemental storm. What makes Lear’s choice of words for being upon a “wheel of fire” stand out as part of the alchemical metaphor context are his next words to Cordelia: “I am bound / Upon a wheel of fire, *that* mine own tears / Do scald like molten lead.” The placing of the word “that” meaning “so that” to explain *why* he was on a wheel of fire figures strikingly in the playgoers’ minds. Lear tells his audience that he has been bound “Upon a wheel of fire” so that (or in order for)

his salt tears could scald or burn out his faults “like molten lead.” With these words, Lear illustrates that he is becoming more conscious of both *how* and *why* transformation is taking place within his mind.

The combination of the lexical features that belong to the register of *alchemia* conjures a specific alchemical “metaphor landscape”¹⁸⁴ that Shakespeare invokes in order to synthesize the registers of Humanism (having concern with the interests and welfare of humans), Christianity (charging individuals with the moral responsibility of having faith in God), and Hermetic alchemical philosophy (illustrating that individuals have the ability to transmute the baser aspects of their selves into a perfected god-like state).

The Second Constituent of the Hermetic Philosophy: Astrology

The second major principal of the Hermetic Philosophy is the belief that the operations of the moon, sun, stars, and planets have an influence on human beings’ bodily movements but do not control their thoughts and actions. The Hermetic texts argue that humans who are devoted merely to corporeal thoughts and actions will fall subject to the whims of blind Fortuna. On the other hand, those who attempt to align their thinking and actions to a higher consciousness and seek to make manifest the godly in the corporeal world will have power over their “selves.” The Hermetic texts argue that the “intelligent substance in [mankind] is self-determining” (*Sto* XVIII, 174). If individuals’ intelligent substance, their divine “self,” maintains “a well-balanced habit of

¹⁸⁴ I use the term “metaphor landscape” to refer to the entire concept of alchemy as the symbolic process of purifying one’s soul. In this context, the entire “landscape” of this metaphor serves to transform the audience members’ minds. They learn about themselves by watching the process of change presented through symbolic models (character actions/reactions). I have appropriated this term from Lawley and Tompkins. Their psychotherapeutic approach to helping people resolve traumatic memories shares a connection with the mimetic process that is accomplished on stage: as most people describe and understand their life experiences in metaphor, the process of watching a metaphorical world modeled in action on stage helps individuals learn about their own feelings and behaviors.

will” then “Destiny [will have] no hold on it”;¹⁸⁵ rather the individual will have “power over [themselves]” [*i.e.*, free will or “power to choose”] and will not be “subject to Necessity” (*Sto* XVIII, 174). “But if it [the intelligent part of mankind] falls away from God, it chooses the corporeal world, and in that way it becomes subject to Necessity, which rules over the Kosmos” (*Sto* IX, 165). Hamlet illustrates this view of human agency when he states to Horatio: “and blest are those / Whose blood and judgment are so well commeddled / That they are not a pipe for Fortune’s finger / To sound what stop she please. Give me that man / That is not passion’s slave and I will wear him / In my heart’s core” (3.2.60-4). Similarly, in *Lear*, Edmund reveals the same belief that the heavens (Fortuna) do not dictate mankind’s actions when he states:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeits of our own behavior—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, moon, and stars, as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence, and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting-on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star! (1.2.121-131)

Edmund’s words here, that humans have a tendency to blame their own evil actions on heavenly predominance, reflect Hermes words to his son Tat that the unconscious individual, or those who have not trained their minds to think on things divine and instead only concentrate their thoughts on things of the material world, “will put off on Destiny [their own] responsibility for evil, and so [they] will never refrain from any evil deed” (*Sto* XI, 170).

Edmund’s language echoes the Hermetic belief that astrological forces do not dictate human beings’ thoughts and actions; even further Edmund elucidates that

¹⁸⁵ Similarly, in CH XVII: “But the rational part of the soul remains free from the domination of the daemons, and fit to receive God into itself...But such men are few indeed; and all others are led and driven, soul and body, by the daemons” (161).

individuals make use of the belief in Fortuna's control in order to eschew responsibility for their own faults and treacherous actions. It is interesting to observe that Edmund never circumvents responsibility for his own selfish actions in the play; the audience understands that Edmund stays true to his beliefs in human agency. Yet, Edmund does not refrain from deceit and manipulation, and, therefore, he is unable to completely control what happens to him. The Hermetic texts illustrate, "the soul, when it cleaves to evil (bodily or material) things, draws near to corporeal nature, and for this reason the man who chooses the worse is under the dominion of Destiny" (*Sto* XVIII, 174). And to this end, Edmund's words late in the play "the wheel is come full circle" shows the audience that he realizes he too is bound upon Fortuna's wheel (that he is subject to a downfall that is out of his control) because he chooses to be governed by his corporeal desires for excess (5.3.177). Edmund understands the Hermetic argument that human beings do not have to be subject to Fortuna's control; but he is not able to embody the philosophy because his selfishness and lust for power makes him unable to apply the Hermetic higher way of living. Edmund's desire for control blinds his reason and dulls the perception of his mind to its dangers. In the Hermetic mode of thinking, one becomes that which he meditates upon; therefore, dwelling on thoughts of hate, envy, power and the like generates discord and failure: disasters in the mind and body. In this way, by focusing on material gain, Edmund clothes himself in a "cloak of darkness,"¹⁸⁶ which in turn makes him subject to Fortuna's control.

Given Edmund's base and corrupt actions, why then does Shakespeare entrust to Edmund, who manipulates his brother, his father, and Lear's daughters, with the

¹⁸⁶ CH VII illustrates that those people who concentrate on material gain can only see their body as a "cloak of darkness," a "web of ignorance" that inhibits them from "behold[ing] the beauty of the truth, and the Good that abides above" (71).

philosophy that encapsulates the entire meaning of change and transmutation of the play (a meaning that rests upon Lear's act of taking responsibility for his own errors instead of blaming others before any healthy resolution can take place)? I contend that Shakespeare has the bastard son Edmund explain the Hermetic belief that humans are not under Fortuna's control in order first to illustrate what it *looks* like when one *knows* the knowledge but cannot *apply* this knowledge in experience, and secondly to expose the social conflict Edmund faces as an illegitimate child. Edmund demonstrates that he has clearly *learned* the Hermetic philosophical tenets of individual agency; for he explains that people are "thieves" or "treachers" not because of "Planetary Influence" but because of their own worldly desires. Yet, ultimately, Edmund is unable to *apply* his learned knowledge, illustrated in his choice to continue his deceitful actions. Thus, the underlying message here is that Edmund becomes evil because this is what he meditated upon. Although he espouses the knowledge that individuals can live outside of Fortune's control, he is unable to avoid being consumed by corporeal desire.

Shakespeare not only uses Edmund to model the necessity of putting the Hermetic philosophy into *practice* (to become a living example of a self-determined being by controlling one's desire for manipulation and control), he also uses Edmund to make a "call to action," to help society make steps toward redefining the connotations of "bastardy." As a bastard son, Edmund is controlled by social conventions that restrict his ability to become anything else but "base" and "illegitimate." In this way, Shakespeare reveals that proscriptive social laws, which equate the supposed "illegitimate" child with "baseness," can cause destruction and corruption because such a title binds one to act within the proscribed boundaries of baseness—to be evil and dishonest. Edmund

questions why he must be branded as base and illegitimate: “Wherefore base? / When my dimensions are as well compact, / My mind as generous, and my shape as true, / As honest madam’s issue? / Why brand they us / With base? With baseness? Bastardy?” (1.2.6-10). Unfortunately, because he was constrained by social convention, Edmund’s only avenue to fashion a semblance of legitimacy involved manipulation and deceit which in turn brought ruin for the kingdom and himself.

At the end of the play, Edmund relinquishes his anger at being the base brother when he hears that Edgar exhibits “charity” by choosing not to kill him (the expected death for a villain to be avenged by the one who was wronged). Edgar tells Edmund, “Let’s exchange charity. / I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund” (5.3.169-170). Additionally, upon hearing how Edgar guided his blind father and how greatly the king has suffered, Edmund has a change of heart and attempts to undo his writ for Cordelia’s execution. Up until this point in the play, Edmund was only able to concentrate his thoughts on fashioning a new identity outside of the proscribed identity as “illegitimate.”¹⁸⁷ Yet, at the end of play, he is able to express remorse and regret for his destructive actions. Since Edmund gives up his need for retribution, one wonders here if Shakespeare is telling his audience to give up their social conventions of illegitimacy. For we are left with the question in our minds, if society did not “brand” Edmund as base and therefore corrupt from the beginning, would he have carried through with his manipulative actions? In other words, we question whether his thoughts and actions were results of nature or nurture.

¹⁸⁷ Edmund explains that he is forced to fashion his own identity since social convention has proscribed a restrictive identity for him: “I see the Business. / Let me, if not by Birth, have Lands by Wit; / All with me’s meet that I can fashion fit” (1.2.203-5).

In addition to Edmund, both Cordelia and Edgar further illustrate the Hermetic attitude toward astrology. Both of these characters, two healing agents in the play, consciously offer their services to help other characters learn from their mistakes, namely Lear and Gloucester. Even though they are able to govern themselves outside of Fortuna's control, they are willing to let themselves be bound upon Fortuna's Wheel in order to assist those who are unaware of their human ability to govern themselves. In Act 4, Edgar tells Gloucester that he has allowed himself to be governed by Fortuna in order to help the king; he has allowed himself to be a "poor man, made tame to fortune's blows, / Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows / Am pregnant to good pity" (4.6.224-26). Edgar is willing to suffer a poorer existence as Poor Tom in order to help both the king and his father attain the wisdom and foresight that they lack. Similarly, Cordelia reveals that she has allowed herself to be on Fortuna's Wheel to help her father: "For thee, oppressed King, I am cast down; / Myself could else outfrown false Fortune's frown" (5.3.5-6). Her words that she could "outfrown" Fortune are appropriate because throughout the play, Cordelia demonstrates that she has reached a higher consciousness than her father, made evident in her unwillingness to join in her father's desire for excess and pride. Cordelia has proven herself to be a "self-determining" being that Destiny has no hold over. Yet, willingly, she chooses to be governed by Fortune to help her father achieve a higher consciousness, and thus falls subject to a downfall out of her control. In the end, Edmund's orders to have her killed cannot be undone; and therefore, the most enlightened and aware human being in the play falls to a death at the hands of another.

Interestingly, Spenser's version of Cordeill in *Faerie Queen* also dies from hanging as does Shakespeare's Cordelia. Yet, while Spenser has her hang herself,

Shakespeare has her hung by the order of Edmund. The other three sources of the Leir story (Monmouth, Holinshed, and Higgins) depict Cordelia stabbing herself. In Spenser's account, the imprisoned Cordeill is visited by Despair who offers multiple instruments of destruction in which to kill herself. Spenser's account of Cordelia, which echoes Higgins' account in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, is ultimately an admonition against suicide. Instead of imitating Higgins' version where Despair kills her with a knife after obtaining her consent, Spenser has her hang herself. In comparison to the other versions of this character, Shakespeare's depiction of Cordelia as an advanced character, who "could else outfrown false Fortune's frown," is his own invention. Thus, in interpreting Cordelia's role in the play, viewers/readers should not see her minimal stage time as diminishing her importance; rather they should interpret Shakespeare's rewriting of Cordelia as a deliberate move to give her agency in guiding others to obtain higher consciousness.

In response to Hamlet's "Give me that man / That is not passion's slave and I will wear him / In my heart's core" we are tempted to show him not a man, but a woman instead (3.2.60-3). For Cordelia's ability to "outfrown" Fortune reveals that she is one "Whose blood and judgment are so well commeddled" that she is "not a pipe for Fortune's finger / To sound what stop she please" (*Hamlet* 3.2.61-2). Cordelia additionally embodies the individual that Hamlet is looking for by means of her name; for the meaning of her name as "heart" echoes Hamlet's desire to hold the self-determining being in his "heart's core." Yet, as Cordelia recognizes that her father needs assistance in discovering how to obtain a well-balanced habit of will, she chooses to relinquish her self-determining power and thus becomes subject to Necessity. Ultimately, Cordelia,

along with Edgar, exemplifies the adept's goal in seeking to manifest the godly in the corporeal world when she illustrates to others how to utilize their own individual power.

The Third Constituent of the Hermetic Philosophy: Theurgy

The theurgical component of the Hermetic texts explains the necessity for training one's soul, as Hermes says to his son: "A man must train his soul in this life" (*Sto* VI, 163) in order to achieve a consciousness that "has the power to apprehend the incorporeal" (CH XIII, 100). Cordelia, Edgar, Kent, and even the Fool serve as guides in the play to help confused and unbalanced characters "train their souls." In this way, Cordelia/Kent/Lear and Edgar/Gloucester represent the initiator/initiate paradigm that Hermes and Tat exemplify in the Hermetic discourses. Shakespeare's reversal of gender and age within this initiate/initiator paradigm is interesting: instead of the father (Hermes) guiding his son (Tat), Shakespeare makes daughter/son (Cordelia & Edgar) guide their fathers (Lear & Gloucester). The notion that age yields wisdom is here redefined to see that the newer generation may be able to see more clearly the wisdom that has been unavailable to individuals who have lost their way over time. Additionally, the notion that the male gender is intellectual/wiser and more capable is here redefined to illustrate that the female gender should not be excluded from individual agency. As Rackin illustrates, women had no voice within the historical record. Yet, even though Cordelia has fewer lines than many male characters in the play, she has one of the most important roles. Cordelia is more advanced than most characters, and it is her state of spiritual attunement that other characters need to acquire. As an advanced being, Cordelia does not try to undermine "the masculine historical project" (patriarchal succession); rather she attempts to enhance their personal power and identity (158). Thus, in a similar vein

to Edmund's public critique of the title "bastard," Shakespeare further invites audiences to engage is reconsidering the social constructs of gender and age.

Cordelia also illustrates her advanced state of being through the name she gives to describe her identity. In Act 4, Cordelia responds with the name that God gives Moses in Exodus: Cordelia's "So I am, I am" conjures God's response "I am that I am."¹⁸⁸ This response intimates that Cordelia has reached fullness of being and perfection; she has manifested in human form the God presence within. Although Shakespeare does not try to equate Cordelia directly with God's perfection, his choice to have her respond in a similar fashion to God's response in the Bible illustrates that she has reached a higher consciousness than any other character in the play; and thus she serve as a guide to other characters, demonstrating to others how to restore order and obtain inner consciousness.

Cordelia's thoughts and actions reveal that she is not interested in personal gain but rather that she fulfils a role to guide Lear toward a higher awareness of his actions.

This is first illustrated in the first scene when Cordelia refuses to barter her love for

¹⁸⁸ See Exodus 3:13, 14. Moses wanted to know the name God who sends him to the Israelites in Egypt. God revealed his name as "I am," with an explanation "I am Who I am." Jehovah is composed of the abbreviated forms of the imperfect, the participle, and the perfect of the Hebrew verb "to be." According to this explanation, the meaning of Jehovah would be "he who will be, is, and has been," "he who is," "I am who I am" (Vulgate) or "I am who is" (Septuagint). Jesus used the power of the Name of God when he said such affirmations as "I AM the way, the truth and the life" (John 14: 6) and "I Am the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25). Jesus was using this "I Am" affirmation to express the concept that God was within him; he was using the "I Am" to illustrate that he was the individualized "I Am" presence—that he had attained his "Christ" self because he learned how to embody God in living form. It is interesting to note, that this "I am" phrase is used in ancient Egypt and Gnostic texts. For instance, Plutarch in *De Iside et Osiris* tells us that a statue of Athena in Sais bore the inscription: "I am all that has been, is, and will be." The patrons of the Egyptian origin of the sacred name appeal to the common Egyptian formula, *Nuk pu nuk* but although its literal signification is "I am I," its real meaning is "It is I who." The theory that "Jahveh" is of Egyptian origin *may* have a certain amount of validity, as Moses was educated in Egypt. In the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*, it is suggested that Jesus identified himself with the name of God, "I Am Who I Am" when Jesus had pulled Thomas aside from the other disciples and told him three words. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him what Jesus said; but Thomas replied that if he told them even one of the words, they would pick up stones and throw them at him. In ancient Judaism, stoning was the punishment for blasphemy (See Leviticus 24:16). Perhaps the three words Jesus uttered to Thomas were the Hebrew words "ehyeh asher ehyeh" translated as "I will be who I will be" or "I am who I am." See Pearson for a discussion of the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*.

material profit. Then again in Act 4, Cordelia explains that she and her army from France have come to conquer Britain not out of desires for fame or revenge but rather out of love for her father's wretched downfall when she exclaims, "No blown ambition doth our arms incite, / But love, dear love, our aged father's right" (4.4.27-8). Furthermore, Cordelia is able to see what Lear needs most is a remedy for his pride and thus she calls upon the earth's "virtues" to support her own healing powers to revive Lear to mental and spiritual health. She states, "All blest secrets, / All you unpublished virtues of the earth, / Spring with my tears! Be aidant and remediate / In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him, / Least his ungoverned rage dissolve the life / That wants the means to lead it" (4.4.15-20). Ultimately, Cordelia attempts to restore Lear's mental health so he will see that he can govern his own actions with his inner knowledge. Cordelia's words to the Gentlemen, "Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed / I' th' sway of your own will" further illustrate the Hermetic argument that individuals have the power within to dispel error (4.7.20-1).¹⁸⁹

In addition to Cordelia, both the Fool and Kent try to help Lear regain his wisdom. Kent reveals that he will serve as a substitute for Lear's lack of wisdom when he states, "See better, Lear, and let me still remain / The true blank of thine eye" (1.1.159-160). In Act 1 as Lear loses his wisdom and insight, Kent tells Lear the candid truth about his unsound action and argues, "When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state, / And in thy best consideration check / This hideous rashness" (1.1.150-2). Yet Lear is unable to understand Kent's wisdom, "Kill thy physician, and thy fee bestow / Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift, / Or whilst I can vent clamor from my throat / I'll

¹⁸⁹ The concept of self-government via one's inner knowledge permeates the Hermetic texts: "every living being that is material is caused, not by things outside the body, but by things within it, which operate outwards from within; that is to say, either by soul or by something else that is incorporeal" (CH II, 56).

tell thee thou dost evil” (1.1.166-9). At this point in the play, Lear is unable to acquire “that divine faculty of apprehending truth”;¹⁹⁰ rather he is only able to yield to reckless impulse. Therefore, to fulfill his role as guide, Kent dons a disguise as Poor Tom in an attempt to help Lear regain his virtue.

Similarly, the Fool attempts to help Lear understand that he has caused his own folly with his rash and impulsive actions. With comments such as “Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise,” the Fool illustrates his role as guide to help Lear gain a higher consciousness (1.5.43). The fool’s riddles serve two purposes: to provide comic relief and to engage Lear’s intellect. The answer to the Fool’s riddle about one’s nose keeping his two eyes in place further engages Lear to use his faculties to become aware of the repercussions of his actions. The Fool states that with the better faculty of sight, a man “may spy into” that which he “cannot smell out” (1.5.23). Here the Fool entices Lear and the audience to “see” beyond the reference to the physical objects of nose and eyes to understand that “eye” signifies internal sight. In penetrating to the depths of the riddle, Lear may learn that he needs insight and foresight,¹⁹¹ an awareness of other people’s actions and the destructive effects of his own. Lear’s immediate response to the Fool’s riddle, “I did her wrong,” illustrates that the Fool’s riddle successfully engaged Lear to employ his internal sight (1.5.20). In Act 3, the Fool’s disappearance from the play may suggest that Lear has gained enough of his own wisdom that he is no longer in need of the Fool’s guidance. Cordelia and the Fool’s role as Lear’s guides are enriched with the potential connection that these two characters were played

¹⁹⁰ See *Asc* I: the work of training the soul is “acquiring that divine faculty of apprehending truth” (119).

¹⁹¹ The word “foresight” closely relates to the meaning of the fool’s use of “spy”: to gain knowledge of a situation to prevent a particular action from taking place.

by the same actor.¹⁹² The characters do not appear on stage at the same time and the fool disappears without explanation in Act 3, Scene 6. Furthermore, the Fool's last words, "I'll to bed at noon" foreshadows not only his exit midway through the play, but it could also serve to foreshadow Cordelia's early exit from existence; for the meaning behind his words illustrate that he will die at the highest point of his life. This is precisely what happens to Cordelia: she dies in her prime, at noon, rather than in old age, at night.

In addition to these characters helping Lear obtain a higher consciousness, Edgar helps Gloucester use his "internal sight" and become theologically reborn. The subplot of Edgar and Gloucester helps to reinforce the function of the main plot.¹⁹³ Gloucester's experiences of becoming blind and gaining internal sight bolster Lear's process of spiritual transformation, for Gloucester may be seen as Lear on a lower plane of social order. Traditional reading of the subplot argues that Gloucester's act of outlawing his legitimate heir and accepting his bastard son in his place is an act that mocks God's order in a similar way that Lear's resignation of his rule and division of his kingdom violates the law of society ordained by God.¹⁹⁴ Certainly, this understanding of these characters' actions is correct and profound on one level of analysis. Yet, there is a deeper spiritual message presented in Gloucester's and Lear's actions that move beyond the traditional *De casibus* reading of nobles falling from grace and power. Gloucester's experience of gaining "internal sight," as a result of losing his corporeal sight, mirrors Lear's experience of gaining a higher consciousness as a result of losing his worldly power and

¹⁹² Further evidence that the Fool and Cordelia were played by the same actor is Lear's reference to Cordelia as his "fool." Lear chides Cordelia for her foolishness in Act 1 and says when he holds her dead body "my poor fool is hanged." The Elizabethan meaning of "fool" was "child," which in this case becomes an affectionate reference of Lear's memories of holding Cordelia in his arms as a baby.

¹⁹³ It is possible that Shakespeare's Gloucester subplot finds its source in Sidney's *Arcadia* with the subplot of King of Paphlagonia and his sons.

¹⁹⁴ See Ribner for further discussion of this theme.

authority. These spiritual experiences of gaining deeper “sight” are mental experiences that were of course put into motion by their physical actions. Yet, as all physical actions have a purpose, we should seek to understand the deeper spiritual connotations of character actions.

After losing his corporeal sight, Gloucester realizes that he never “saw” clearly with his corporeal eyes. His words, “I stumbled when I saw. Full oft ’tis seen / Our means secure us, and our mere defects / Prove our commodities,” illustrate that losing his eyesight proves valuable as it forces him to rely on his “inner sight” (4.1.19-21). Edgar’s act of leading Gloucester to a pretend death symbolizes his role in helping Gloucester achieve a rebirth of sorts, a rebirth that leads Gloucester out of the darkness of his despair and into the brightness of new hope. Gloucester’s melancholic mood precipitates what turns out to be a fortunate fall not from but into grace (4.6.52). In alchemical terms, to experience a rebirth, Gloucester needs to metaphorically “fall” from the supposed heights of authority and power to the depths of pain and anguish caused by losing everything: his son, his land, his title, his sight—in other words losing everything in the material world. In metaphorically falling from the cliffs to his death, Gloucester becomes more attune to his need for mental and spiritual clarity over any need for material sustenance.

The “chalky bourn” at Dover, which phonetically and symbolically echo “born,” signify that Gloucester has been theologically¹⁹⁵ reborn (4.6.57). Perhaps Shakespeare’s intent to include these cliffs is linked to his argument regarding “sight.” It is possible that

¹⁹⁵ I use the term “theological” here because it best describes the process of being spiritually “born again” as in Wycliff’s 1382 version of John 3: “But a man schal be born agen”; or Tyndale’s 1388 version: “boren a newe”; or King James 1611 version: “borne againe.” “Born again” means “to be born of God”—to allow the part of the self that is divine (God) to be the central presence in one’s self.

the cliffs at Dover¹⁹⁶ have a connection to the description of Lear's burial sight in an underground chamber in Monmouth's version of *Leir*. In turn, Monmouth's underground chambers may be a reference to the underground tunnels at Dover. In the Middle Ages, tunnels/chambers were dug at Dover to provide soldiers with the ability to make a surprise attack. Monmouth's version states that Lear was secretly hidden until "he had fully accomplished all that Cordelia had *borne* him on hand to do" (2:12:51, my emphasis). Shakespeare's reference to Dover provides a connection with Monmouth's source and the concept of internal awareness; for the hidden underground chambers and Lear's secret hiding place (where he remains until he has been spiritually "borne" again) yield the same connection with gaining internal "sight." The "hovel," to which Kent leads Lear, also echoes this idea of journeying to an internal "space" to gain insight. Thus connected to the thought of Dover, the hovel, and "borne," is the concept of being theologically (spiritually) reborn via journeying metaphorically to the internal part of the self to gain the understanding that one should reflect his inherent, internal god-like nature.

Furthermore, as the first and last sight of England for travelers coming to and from the continent, these cliffs become the very symbol of Britain's identity, of its power in maintaining independent identity. This identity is further symbolically reinforced by the fact that the cliffs are white—a signifier that Britain remains pure of "self" despite pressures from the mainland.¹⁹⁷ Gloucester's spiritual rebirth and the cliffs of Dover are connected to both literal and metaphorical sight. As a symbol of England's power and

¹⁹⁶ Shakespeare's integration of the cliff at Dover may be inspired by his company's visit in 1605. Yet Muir illustrates that this visit may not be the source of Shakespeare's inspiration because they also visited Dover previously in 1597 (xxiv).

¹⁹⁷ The symbolism of Britain as "white" is further echoed in the oldest known name of the island, "Albion," which is thought to be a derivative of the white cliffs at Dover. "Alba" is Latin for "white."

identity, the “sight” of the cliffs in one’s mind is invested with metaphorical significance just as Gloucester’s literal loss of sight becomes a metaphorical representation of his need and ability to acquire spiritual “sight.” In this way, Edgar’s words, “Do but look up” function symbolically; for here Edgar asks Gloucester to use his “internal eyes” to see a new direction (4.6.59).

In using the cliffs in a metaphorical sense (as Gloucester only thinks he is at the cliffs), Edgar helps audience members understand that the spiritual and incorporeal experience is always one that takes place in the mind. Thus, Lear’s words, “who alone suffers suffers most i’ th’ mind” (3.6.104), illustrate that the most important experience is the experience one has in his mind. Physical world experiences are vehicles for analytical thinking; they are useful in helping people learn how to interpret their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, Edgar’s words “look up” do not refer to literal sight but rather figurative sight as he is trying to get Gloucester to become spiritually reborn. The theological message is for Gloucester to internally look higher to his divine self to help the discord to cease. Gloucester’s decision to turn away from his despair after his supposed near-death experience illustrates that he has internalized Edgar’s distinction between literal and figurative sight.

Gloucester’s pseudo death experience provided him with the mental experience of connecting with his higher self without having to physically die. In this way, Edgar helps audience members theoretically understand how one could learn from an internal, mental experience just as effectively as having to carry out the real lived experience. For as audience members understand, the actions displayed on stage are a step removed from actual experience; as feigned stories, the movements on stage are more closely aligned to

metaphorical actions being played out in the space of one's mind. Thus in mentally walking through the steps in a metaphorical simulated experience in the theater of one's mind, individuals are able to lift themselves out of being controlled by their material bodily passions that, when allowed to take over, often dominate their thoughts and actions.

Thus, the "heavy substance," human beings' physical body, can lead people to focus on material existence and less on divine understanding. Here we should view Gloucester's corporeal sight as a garment that restricts him from seeing divine sight. In a similar fashion, the Hermetic texts refer to the human body and corporeal desire as a garment or "cloak of darkness, this web of ignorance...this bond of corruption," which often blinds individuals from being able to embody their divine selves (CH VII, 71). Hermes expounds, "Such is the garment in which you have clothed yourself; and it grips you to itself and holds you down, that you may not *look upward* and behold the beauty of the Truth" which is knowledge of the higher self and God (71, my emphasis). Gloucester's corporeal eyes blinded him from seeing beyond worldly fears and desires. Yet, with the opportune misfortune of having his eyes plucked out, Gloucester with Edgar's assistance was able to embody the last stage of the Hermetic philosophy and reawaken to his superior inner sight.

The ending of the play further illustrates the Hermetic action of training one's soul "so man's consciousness [can be] wholly [re-]absorbed in the knowledge of God" (Asc III, 147). The play's denouement has troubled many scholars from the 17th to the 19th century¹⁹⁸ as the death of innocent Cordelia depicted a wicked world devoid of just

¹⁹⁸ Literary critics Charles Gildon 1710, Thomas Cooke 1731, and Samuel Johnson 1756 preferred Tate's 1681 version over Shakespeare's because they liked the happy ending where Lear's regaining of his throne

reward. In 1681, the ending troubled Nahum Tate to such a degree that he transformed *King Lear* into a tragicomedy, eliminating the Fool and the King of France, turning Edgar and Cordelia into a romantic couple, and restoring Lear to a peaceful retirement with Kent and Gloucester, in order to create poetic justice. I contend that Shakespeare's play does not reflect an annihilation of poetic justice but rather faith in human agency to attain consciousness and wisdom. When we read Shakespeare's play through the lens of the Hermetic philosophy, the denouement provides a satisfying and spiritual conclusion; the play reflects faith in human agency to undergo transformation of the soul for those who work to "spiritually see."

William R. Elton's argument that viewers are left with thoughts of loss and illusion is misleading and inaccurate.¹⁹⁹ Elton regards Lear's last dying words, about seeing something—perhaps breath—on Cordelia's lips, as suggestive that Lear desires to see Cordelia alive again in bodily form. I assert that Lear's last words, "Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips. / Look there, look there," indicate that he has been able to use his spiritual sight to see her soul depart her body (5.3.316-17). In ancient Greece and Byzantium, the soul was understood to leave the physical body through the mouth or

and Cordelia's marriage to Edgar illustrate in Tate's words that "truth and virtue shall at last succeed." Gildon states: "The King and Cordelia ought by no means to have dy'd, and therefore Mr. Tate has very justly alter'd that particular, which must disgust the Reader and Audience to have Vertue and Piety meet so unjust a Reward...We rejoice at the deaths of the Bastard and the two sisters, as of Monsters in Nature under whom the very Earth must groan. And we see with horror and Indignation the death of the King, Cordelia, and Kent." (Incidentally, 17th-and 18th-century famous actors who played Lear: David Garrick, John Philip Kemble, and Thomas Betterton were portraying Tate's Lear and not Shakespeare's). In opposition, critics Joseph Addison, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, and Anna Jameson preferred Shakespeare's version arguing that it was only natural that Lear should die after having so greatly suffered. Macready removed all traces of Tate from *Lear* in the 19th century.

¹⁹⁹ William R. Elton exemplifies the response from many scholars that the ending of the play is troublesome. Since both Lear and Cordelia die in the end, it appears that the play demonstrates "annihilation of faith in poetic justice or divine justice" and that "no redemption stirs at this world's end, only suffering, tears, pity, and loss – and illusion" (334).

nostrils.²⁰⁰ Similarly, in the Renaissance, a kiss was thought to create a union of body and soul, which fits within this view that the soul exits the body through the opening of the mouth. Lear's words, "My poor *fool* is hang'd" has a connection with the traditional depiction of one's soul as a newborn child (5.3.304, my emphasis) as "fool" in the Renaissance had connotations of "child." Perhaps we should read Lear's words here as a recognition that Cordelia has risen in her spirit form. Although the loss of her saddens him, his recognition that her soul has left her body and lives on allows him to die with joy. In seeing the feather stir on the looking glass that he has placed on her lips, he recognizes that her soul has departed her body via her mouth.

In this vein, Lear's words, "Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips" illustrate that he has become more spiritually attuned to perceive with his corporeal eyesight the things of incorporeal existence. This in turn illustrates that he is in the last stage of the alchemical process, projection: he has been able to project, to see with inner sight the things of the incorporeal realm, and thus he moves closer to embodying his divine self in human existence. Shakespeare helps audience members recognize that Lear sees Cordelia's soul rise from her body toward "heaven" by having Edgar and Kent see the same action happen with Lear's soul. Directly after Lear dies, Edgar tells Lear's ghost to "Look up, my lord," signaling to Lear's soul that the world above is waiting for him (5.3.318). Edgar's words here echo his advice to his father at Dover. Edgar tells Lear to use his spiritual eyes to "see" the reality of the union of spirit and matter; for as a ghost, his incorporeal substance (his soul), Lear can witness that it is spirit which vivifies

²⁰⁰ For instance, in the 10th-century Byzantine image, "Virgin's Koimesis," the salvation of the soul is made pictorially comprehensible. Christ stands next to the Virgin's dead body, holding in his hand her soul in the traditional form of a child. Additionally, in *Life of St. Basil the Younger* (10th century), a woman named Theodora speaks of her near-death experience. She illustrates the moment of death when the soul leaves the body through the mouth. This image is also depicted in the Psalter Dionysiou. See Kalavrezou, 108.

matter into action. Immediately after Edgar tells Lear's ghost to spiritually look up/look higher, Kent tells Edgar, "Vex not his ghost. Oh let him pass! He hates him / That would upon the rack of this tough world / Stretch him out longer" (5.3.319-321). In this way, the play does not end with "illusion"—the desire to see Cordelia or Lear alive in the material world again—but rather with a vision of transformation. Lear is able to exit the corporeal world because his greater consciousness led him beyond selfish desires. Thus, Lear, as Gloucester before him, dies of joy,²⁰¹ as he sees Cordelia live on in spirit form.

Furthermore, Lear's desire, to leave his corrupt kingdom to be in "a walled prison" with Cordelia to "take upon's the mystery of things" as if both of them were "God's spies" who could outlive "packs and sects of great ones, / That ebb and flow by th' moon," no longer is simply his desire; it has now become his reality (5.3.18, 16, 17, 18-19). Lear's words at the beginning of Scene 3 foreshadow his reality at the end of the play, as if he were projecting what would happen to both Cordelia and him. In exiting the corporeal world, both Lear and Cordelia become "God's spies" who understand the "mystery of things" and serve as the custodians of the "blest secrets" and the "unpublished virtues of the earth" (4.4.15, 16). By vocalizing his desire to understand the "mystery of things," Lear was able to materialize his vision of reaching heaven, of ascending to Godhead. He has finally been able to use his mind to shape his experience.

Lear's process of projection reflects the Hermetic belief in using the mind to shape one's reality and understanding. The Hermetic texts explain the power of the mind to do such things as bid the soul to "travel to any land" even to "fly up to heaven" with "no need of wings;" for the soul can "break forth from the universe itself, and gaze on the

²⁰¹ Edgar states that Gloucester died with a smile on his face: "Twixt two extremes of passion, joy, and grief, / Burst smilingly" (5.3.197-8).

things outside” the corporeal world to gain perspective of the reality of the union of spirit and matter (CH XI, 90). Yet, once the mind ignores its ability and cleaves to selfish desires, individuals have lost sight of his power to create change: “if you shut up your soul in your body, and abase yourself, and say ‘I know nothing, I can do nothing’ ... ‘I cannot mount to heaven; I know not what I was, nor what I shall be’ ... then your thought can grasp nothing beautiful and good” because “you cleave to the body, and are evil” (91). This process of *projection* is the twelfth stage in the alchemical process, outlined by such alchemists as Roger Bacon and George Ripley as the final maturation of the metal into its purified form.²⁰² In his final stage of transmutation, Lear quits his body so that “mind and speech will be his guides”; and it is at this point that “he will be brought into the troop of the gods and the souls that have attained to [this] bliss” (CH XII, 95). This Hermetic idea that self-determining beings experience the bliss of enlightenment is mirrored in Lear’s view of Cordelia that she is a “soul in bliss” (4.7.46). In response to Cordelia’s question “do you know me,” Lear explains that he thinks she is “a spirit” (4.7.48, 49). Seeing Cordelia as a “spirit” may illustrate that Lear is still in a state of madness; for when he tells her that she is a spirit, Cordelia is still alive in physical form. However, on a deeper level, his statement may be an intentional foreshadowing of his ability to see Cordelia’s spirit leave her body at the moment of death and ultimately his new-found ability to see Cordelia’s true identity as a spiritual being.

After both Cordelia and Lear make their final transitions to join their divine counterparts, Kent understands that his job as a guide and healing agent for Lear is complete and he too recognizes that he will depart the world and make the journey to

²⁰² The 12 stages of the alchemical process are as follows: calcination, solution, separation, conjunction, putrefaction, congelation, cibation, sublimation, fermentation, exaltation, multiplication, and projection.

“heaven.” Kent’s words to Edgar, “I have a journey, sir, shortly to go. / My master calls me; I must not say no,” reveal that he will now exit the corporeal world and join both his earthly master Lear and his heavenly master God in the incorporeal world (5.3.327-8). Kent’s worldly exit reveals, more strongly than his selfless role as Lear’s guide, that he has the ability to shape and control his own existence.

Kent, Edgar, the Fool, and Cordelia help Lear understand how to achieve the third component of the Hermetic philosophy; they help show him how to manifest a higher awareness of his thoughts and actions. Cordelia sets into motion Lear’s symbolic alchemical transformation when she withdraws from Lear’s destructive, selfish behavior. Kent helps Lear recognize that he has caused his own “fall” via his pride, his “hideous rashness,” and his lack of judgment. And both Kent and the Fool serve as Lear’s “wisdom,” Lear’s own inner physician, while Lear undergoes transformation from nothing to something (the alchemical process of stripping away impurities). Finally, Edgar disguised as Poor Tom helps Lear realize that his self-absorbed actions caused his own destruction. In seeing Poor Tom hungry and without clothing to protect him from the storm, Lear tells himself: “Consider him well” (3.4.102). Lear realizes that Poor Tom is “the thing” (“Thou art the thing itself” 3.4.104) that will instruct him on mankind’s nature. For “unaccommodated man” is nothing more than an “animal” (3.4.105). Thus, Lear chooses to join Edgar in stripping off the material “lendings” (3.4.107) that restrict him from having deeper knowledge of himself. Ultimately, the symbolic alchemical process of stripping away impurities from Lear’s mind allows him to free his spirit from his body in order to reach a higher consciousness—to make manifest the thoughts of the

divine counterpart of himself, and thus to put into motion Cordelia's wisdom, "Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed / i' th' sway of your own will" (4.7.20-1).

The symbolism of "sight" or having "insight" is significant to both Lear and Gloucester's transformations. Lear learns metaphorically what Gloucester learns physically: that internal sight is mankind's remedy for the ungoverned desires instigated by corporeal sight; individuals must manifest, in their actions, the wisdom of their higher selves. Gloucester's physical loss of corporeal eyesight leads him on his path to gaining internal sight, while Lear's loss of his ability to see effective means of governance leads him on his path to achieving a higher consciousness. In the end, Lear learns how to live beyond the material world of riches and fame to embody the higher principles of love and humility. Therefore, we should view his death as symbolic of his loss of "the material world" but the gaining of his "soul."

Conclusion: The Play as a Symbolic Looking-Glass

Shakespeare's act of disembedding the language of alchemy from the nucleus of the philosophical tracts allows a wider audience to co-mingle with the ideas of self-regeneration. In this way, the two discourses—the fall of man because of his vices (Christian) and the possibility to transmute the self into perfection (Hermetic)—coincide to create one powerful discourse, which resonates in the minds and hearts of the playgoers long after they leave the theater. Shakespeare uses the metaphorical language of alchemy in this play in order to reveal the significance of the circular process of growth and the unity of soul and body. In analyzing a piece of discourse, as James Paul Gee outlines, it is important to decipher the type of the activity a piece of language enacts. In this view, *King Lear* enacts the process of holding up a mirror to the audience

so that they can see how to go about transmutation of their inner selves (a process similar to Hamlet's advice to the players in 3.2.22). The concept of the play as mirror or "looking glass" echoes the objective of the *Mirror*: "for here as in a looking glass, you shall see how the like have been punished in the heretofore, whereby admonished I trust it will be a good occasion to move you. This is the chief end which is set forth...punish sin boldly, both in yourself and others" (3-4). Although *Lear* does not share this same admonition to "punish" the sin of the characters, both texts function as symbolic looking glasses from which audience members see aspects of their own need for self-discovery and change. While *The Mirror* literally has characters learn about their mistakes in front of a mirror, *Lear* symbolically illustrates the same reflective process by providing an example of self-examination on stage.

The forum of the theater was the nucleus for all to come together and experience similar emotions. In this sense, the theater itself was the vessel where all the people (metals) inside underwent various types of transformations in thinking and feeling via performances from the actors (the agents of sulfur and mercury in the alchemists' language). The theater was the round wheel upon which all the actors and the audience members underwent transformation of thought and feeling when they watched a world in microcosm performed before their eyes. By illustrating some characters who are unable and yet others who are able to attain self-awareness, Shakespeare has successfully presented the full spectrum of society's actions. Not all members of society are at the same emotional and intellectual development. Thus, in an attempt to present a worldview within which most if not all members of the audience could identify, Shakespeare creates a world that illustrates both malevolence and benevolence.

Lear functions as a microcosmic representation of one who has already obtained a degree of self-development, represented in his role as king, but one who still needs to probe further to embody a philosophical form of spiritual health. In this framework, audience members are presented with the notion that self-perfection is a journey, an ongoing process, that may never fully have an “end”; for like peeling the layers of an onion, in reaching one layer, there are always more layers that one must discover toward reaching the “core,” in this case, of knowing the self. This view that knowing the self is accomplished in stages reflects the Hermetic paradigm that life is an education where one learns in stages how to achieve self-mastery.

The world in microcosm in *Lear* is parallel to the world in microcosm in the Hermetic philosophy. Merlin’s Prophecy, proclaimed by the Fool in Act 3, illustrates the Hermetic alchemical *solve et coagula* concept which requires the metaphorical exchange of a solid becoming a liquid and liquid becoming a solid, the process of co-fusing spirit and matter to make “again of all things good, a holy and awestrking restoration of all nature” (*Asc* III, 138). When the Fool states, “When every case in law is right, / No squire in debt, nor no poor knight; / When slanders do not live in tongues...And bawds and whores do churches build,” “Then shall the Realm of Albion²⁰³ / Come to great confusion” (3.2.87-92, 85-6), he is illustrating the Hermetic belief that “by transmutation the things made are purged of evil”; via transmutation, things that were corrupt are now turned to good (*CH XVI*, 107).

In addition to promoting alchemy as a metaphor for self-transformation, the play also illustrates that “Planetary Influence” does not dictate mankind’s actions and

²⁰³ This is the oldest known name of the island of Great Britain, which is thought to be a derivative of the white cliffs at Dover. “Alba” is Latin for “white.”

thoughts. Edmund never eschews taking responsibility for his villainous actions because he knows that human beings are not “villains on necessity” “by spherical predominance” (1.2.124, 126). Yet, even with this knowledge, he desires to undo the binding “illegitimate” identity that causes him to remain “passion’s slave”—one who is controlled by his own corporeal desires. Edmund, as a bastard son, is bound by social convention to be illegitimate and base. Thus, Shakespeare highlights to his audience that proscriptive social law can create destruction and corruption.

Furthermore, the characters Cordelia, Kent, Edgar, and the Fool illustrate the theurgical component in the Hermetic trope of self-mastery as they help guide Lear to acquire “that divine faculty of apprehending truth” which allows him to “repel and put away from [himself] the evil passions inherent” in the material world (*Asc* I, 119 & III, 135). Lear is able to dispel “the darkness of error” “from [his] soul,” when he absorbs himself in the “discourse concerning things divine” (*Asc* III, 147).

The combination of all three components of the Hermetic philosophy provides a powerful microcosmic glimpse into how individuals could begin to train their souls and regain their original “Edenic” divine and god-like natures. Shakespeare shows in a world of metaphor and symbolic action that the process for becoming a “self-determining” individual is performed by destroying corrupt thoughts that produce the injurious fumes of madness in the symbolic alchemical vessel of the brain, “the Sulfurous Mind,”—a process that clearly illustrates, “who alone suffers suffers most i’ th’ mind.” By juxtaposing characters’ language and actions in the play with the language in the Hermetic texts, we are able to identify an alternative view of spiritual purification not qualified in orthodox religious discourses. This Hermetic view promoted individuals’

ability to shape their own existence by having the capacity to, as Cordelia exemplifies, “Be governed by [their own] knowledge, and proceed / I’ th’ sway of [their] own will” (4.7.20-1). It is fitting that Shakespeare would chose Cordelia to be Lear’s spiritual guide, for the meaning of her name—derived from the Latin “cor”/”heart”—helps to illustrate that her words and actions penetrate to the “heart” or “core” of the Hermetic philosophy-theological message on soul advancement.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ The Hermetic, Platonic, and Stoic belief that the soul was situated in the heart bears significance to Cordelia’s name and her role as Lear’s teacher on soul development.

**“Sound Reason and True Religion”:
The Unification of New Science and Hermetic Principles in *New Atlantis***

Bacon’s *New Atlantis* carries on the utopian genre tradition originating in Plato’s *Republic* and brought back to life in More’s *Utopia*.²⁰⁵ While *Utopia* (1516) reveals more about what More thought was wrong with England than it does about a new design for a healthy society (as suggested by the meaning of “utopia” as “no place”), Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1625) illustrates a progressive working society that he hoped would become a reality in the future. *New Atlantis* is precisely his “working model” of his plan for “the great instauration.” The dual meaning of “instauration” as both a “restoration” and a great “founding” illustrates Bacon’s goal in restoring certain ancient and early modern ideas and practices that would provide the solid foundation from which to “found” a better living condition for the human race in terms of physical, mental, and spiritual health. Bacon argues that his new social order does not rely on “any sect or doctrine” but rather on “human utility and power” (*GI*, 16).

Even though he did not rely on specific doctrines, his model of a new society applies certain ancient ideas and practices. In calling his fiction the “*New*” *Atlantis*, Bacon reveals that his new social order shares similarities with the ancient Atlantean civilization as depicted in Plato’s *Timaeus* and *Critias*, namely that both societies are technologically advanced. Yet, the “*New*” signals to readers that his example of society

²⁰⁵ 86 year after More’s *Utopia*, Tommaso Campanella wrote his utopia *City of the Sun* (1602) to promote a theocratic monarchy in which Spanish kings and the Pope would act as instruments of the Divine Plan. Campanella was inspired by the Arabic text *Picatrix*—modeling his city after the city of Adocentyn with its reliance upon astrological guidance. Later, Johann Valentin Andreae argued in his utopia *Christianopolis* (1619) that the answer to creating social order was by synthesizing science and Christian ideals. After Bacon, James Harrington’s utopia *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) served as a metaphor for interregnum England, where the lawgiver Olphaus Megaletor represents Cromwell. Lastly, Margaret Cavendish’s satirical fantasy world *A Description of a New World or The Blazing World* (1666) is the only utopian work written by a woman in both the English and European literary world.

successfully eliminates the excessive pride that caused the fall of ancient Atlantis. In Bacon's mind, individuals fell not because they sought after knowledge of God but rather from their own blinding desire to be *above* God. They fell because of their "ambitious and proud desire of moral knowledge to judge of good and evil" (*GI*, 16). This is precisely the reason for the fall of Atlantis as depicted in Plato's account of Atlantis—a scientifically advanced civilization that attempted to control other nations out of its desire to become superior. Moreover, by privileging nature over dialectic, Bacon diverges from the ancient Greek preference for contemplation over the practical arts. Bacon incorporates Aristotle's focus on experience of the material world with Plato's focus on the immaterial purposes of the soul; he is both a philosopher of nature and a theologian of the god-self within.

What differentiates Bacon's goal from Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Descartes' political and new scientific aims is Bacon's inclusion of the Hermetic trope of self-mastery. While they all emphasize action over contemplation and argue that nature and society should become the objects of human control, Bacon embraces the Hermetic mission to investigate nature as part of the process to investigating the self and God. For Bacon, the aims of natural philosophy are not to gain knowledge for its own sake nor simply for the particular useful ends brought about scientific advances, but rather for the restoration of human dominion over nature that mankind had before the fall.²⁰⁶ In this framework, Bacon attempts, through the process of natural philosophy, to help mankind progress from using his human mind to further use his higher mind, his "divine mind" (*NO* # 23, 51) to not simply gain knowledge but to apply this knowledge for the

²⁰⁶ Before Bacon, Bruno, in his *Spacciode la bestia trion faute* which he published while he was in England in 1584, argued that mankind's new spiritual direction should unify Christianity with Hermetic philosophy in order to restore humankind to its original state of divinity.

reinstatement of mankind's original divine condition. Thus what distinguishes Bacon from other founders of modern thought is his inclusion of the philosophical-theological roots of the Hermetic mode of thinking,²⁰⁷ which prompts individuals to *embody* their divine essences and become mortal gods in this life.²⁰⁸ While Benjamin Farrington argues that Bacon "infected and corrupted natural studies by his theology as much as Aristotle did by his dialectic," we must understand that at the core of Bacon's "instauration" was the spiritual drive for mankind to embody its god-like nature (115).

Thus, Bacon's new instauration cannot afford to ignore its theological concerns²⁰⁹ because central to his new instauration is the tenet that "human Knowledge and human Power do really meet in one," and this "one" direction is individuals' spiritual understanding of themselves as divine, as gods who have dominion over creation as

²⁰⁷ Scholarship on Aristotelian influences on Bacon (Perez-Ramos), rhetoric and Bacon (Vickers) and alchemy and Bacon (Rees) is abounding. Although scholars recognize that Hermetism contributed to Bacon's new philosophy, no studies have analyzed Bacon's inclusion of the Hermetic strain of thought in detail. This is what I aim to accomplish in this chapter.

²⁰⁸ See CH X: "We must not shrink then from saying that a man on earth is a mortal god" (84) and "we have been made gods" (101). This tenet is also reflected in the Delphic maxim: "Know Thyself," which was attributed to philosophers such as Pythagoras and Socrates. From the 1st century BCE on, the meaning of this maxim was widely known as "know yourself to be a god."

²⁰⁹ Prior to Bacon, a gulf between natural philosophy and theology began to arise between the northern Italian school with Pomponazzi, Zabarella, Nifo, and Telesio who argued that natural philosophy and religion should be separate disciplines and the French school with Ramus who argued for the union of reason and faith. See Gaukroger, 93. Similarly, Bacon attempts to maintain a connection between natural philosophy and theology because he understands that mankind cannot rely solely on God for knowledge and advancement nor can mankind rely exclusively on human resources. For upon relying exclusively on human resources, man often becomes blinded to the "Ideas of the divine mind" because of the "Idols of [his] human mind": whereby the human mind presents "certain empty dogma" while the divine mind shows "the true signatures and marks set upon the works of creation as they are found in nature" (NO #23, 51). Therefore as Bacon argues in *Advancement*, moral philosophy/religion and natural philosophy need to go hand in hand: what moral philosophy does not provide is the means of educating the mind, which when gained through the process of natural philosophy, mankind can aspire to and attain what is good in action not simply in contemplation. As Cunningham points out, starting in the 13th century, theology as a new discipline was established in the new universities as a science. In response to Grant's argument that science was a secular discipline cut off from theology, Cunningham argues that most advocates of natural philosophy from the 13th to the 15th centuries were theologians whose drive to know God was at the forefront of their study of nature. This does not mean, however, that natural philosophy as a discipline constantly discussed God or that it was concerned with promoting Christian doctrine. See Grant's *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages* and Cunningham's *Before Science: the Invention of the Friars' Natural Philosophy*.

depicted in Genesis 1:28 (*GI*, 32). Bacon's model of a new society is constructed on certain principles expressed in Biblical, Platonic, and Hermetic texts, namely that the process for gaining personal "salvation"²¹⁰ involves the tripartite investigation of nature, the self, and God. Additionally, in order to be fully "restored to [their] perfect and original condition" as divine, human beings must not "vainly" attempt to "overrule" nature—for nature cannot be "commanded" ("conquered" as *vincitur* suggests) "except by being obeyed" (*GI*, 32).²¹¹ Thus, in Bacon's depiction of a world that is to be "commanded" rather than endured (a world where human beings create their own destiny), theology figures at the forefront of his new epistemology. Humanity's ultimate goal in this life is to know God and know the self as god. In this way, the role of the New

²¹⁰ My argument here is not that Bacon collapses the state of mind into the state of soul in his pursuit to help humanity attain to salvation and regain its divine original status. For Bacon, the *study* of nature helps mankind develop and perfect the state of mind, and the *application* of the knowledge, gained by studying nature, helps mankind perfect the state of the soul. While *Descartes* in *Meditations* (1641) argues that knowledge of mankind's place in nature and its relationship to God can only come from rational contemplation, Bacon argues that empiricist activity is the first step in gaining knowledge of nature and God. Additionally, whereas Descartes prefers to treat natural philosophy and theology as separate disciplines because he argues that the state of one's soul is a task left up to God, Bacon argues that the state of the human mind and the state of the soul are interconnected for it is through the proper development of the human mind that individuals may then be able to develop their divine minds. See *Novum* #23. Descartes argues in his Letter of Dedication to the Dean and Doctors at the Sorbonne in his *Meditations* that it is through the fear of God and/or the expectation of another life that persuades mankind to virtue over vice, Bacon argues that there is a third option beyond having fear of God or the promise of the afterlife: the understanding that mankind has the ability to attain to salvation on his own. Thus, for Bacon, Mind and Soul are connected in that mankind's Divine Mind is precisely Soul as maintained in the Hermetic philosophy-theological mode of thinking. Thus in this paradigm, individuals' use of the human mind to gain knowledge (via natural philosophy) is what *leads* them to the path of salvation; but it is individuals' application of this knowledge (their ability to embody the knowledge) that they can *achieve* their own salvation.

²¹¹ These four principles find their roots in the Biblical argument in Genesis 1:28 that human beings were created to "have dominion" over the rest of creation"; in the Platonic argument that mankind needed to imitate nature's order and revolutions because nature was the manifestation of Mind/God in the universe; in the Gnostic argument that Jesus the Christ actually taught human beings that they may manifest the "Christ" within themselves and thus attain their own salvation (See Introduction Chapter footnotes 12-14); and in the Hermetic argument that through the process of understanding nature, individuals could understand themselves, and thus understand themselves as "Sons of God" (See Introduction Chapter footnotes 12, 33, & 52). The argument that all individuals can work to obtain their true natures as "Sons of God" is illustrated in Hermes' teachings in CH I, Christ's teachings in Col. 1:25 & II Cor. 4:4, the Gnostic *Gospel of James*, and Sethian & Valentinian Gnosticism.

Science for Bacon was not an autonomous enterprise cut off from the human concerns of moral, political, and spiritual principles.

Bacon's Thought in Context

Francis Bacon wrote in a millenarian atmosphere, which prophesied the return of the conditions of Adam and Paradise. Many writers wove millenarian ideas of Saturn's Golden Age and Adamic innocence into different genres of writing, namely poetry and the utopian genre. Many saw the new stars, Serpentarius and Cygnus discovered in 1604, as symbolic representations of the new millenarian change. Authors from both the religious and secular traditions envisioned a new world where everyone shared in the common lot, where private property was unknown, where peace and harmony reigned undisturbed, and where human labor was not necessary because the earth produced its own abundance and luxury—a vision which More in *Utopia*, Spencer in the *Faerie Queen*, and Marvell in "Bermudas" painted.

Whereas the Christian tradition talked about spiritual growth, the secular tradition talked about advancing the material growth of humanity. By the late 17th century, authors, such as Meric Casaubon, argued that the new science, with its focus on material utility over spiritual welfare, decreased one's attention to moral and religious knowledge. For many Protestant thinkers, progress and providence were linked. For instance, Protestant preachers Richard Hooker, Richard Sibbes, and William Perkins stressed mankind's reliance on Christ and believed that the physician's medicine is worthless because, with Christ's return, a second garden (similar to the Garden of Eden) will produce fruits and herbs that will save men from both sickness and death. Yet where some held a religious attitude that labor was almost futile because Christ would once

again come and save humanity,²¹² others, namely those captivated by the occult philosophy,²¹³ developed an alternative discourse to dogmatic religious and humanistic thought. This new discourse deemphasized the religious belief that individuals' redemption occurred only through Christ's second coming in order to emphasize their ability to work for their own salvation.²¹⁴

Bacon shares a similar occult philosophical view that people have the ability, through a great deal of labor, to understand the hidden structure and secret workings of nature: to see how things worked, by what force they were made, and the manner in which they could be transformed. As Robert M. Schuler points out, Bacon found in Virgil's Jupiter theodicy a new way of interpreting the curse of labor laid on fallen mankind in Genesis 3:19, "in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread until you return to the ground."²¹⁵ By appropriating the georgic theme of "labor omnia vicit," Bacon emphasizes the positive value of work in order to gain knowledge and power, all of which Bacon argues is necessary to effect change in the material and spiritual domains. Bacon maintains that human beings do not need to wait for divine intervention because they have the ability through physical, mental, and spiritual activities to perform "divine acts," such as curing themselves from sickness and even death—an ability that many religious and humanist thinkers reserved only to God.

²¹² The Reformed doctrine of Total Depravity advocated by the Protestant Reformers, such as Calvin and Hooker, argued that we are justified not because of anything in ourselves but because of the alien or external righteousness of Christ imputed to us. Authors, such as Cordatus and Beza, refrained from granting mankind personal agency and power because of their belief in the doctrine of original sin. Calvinism was monergistic (objects of God's election participate in, but do not contribute to, the salvific or regenerative processes) not synergistic (the view that God and man work together, each contributing their part to accomplish regeneration in and for the individual).

²¹³ See for example: Johann Andreae supposed author of the third Rosicrucian text, Robert Fludd, Michael Maier, John Heydon the late 17th-century author who thought Bacon's *New Atlantis* depicted the Rosicrucian brotherhood, Robert Boyle, Johannes Harlieb, Thomas Charnock, and John Dee.

²¹⁴ For instance, Paracelsus argued that it was man's responsibility to dissect nature in order to extract and discover the remedies that God had provided for man in every living thing.

²¹⁵ See Schuler, 46.

It is clear that Bacon's investigation of nature and the acquisition of knowledge depend on prior secular and religious discourses. In *Novum Organum* (1620), Bacon shows the roles that religion and secular learning play in man's²¹⁶ life: "For man by the fall fell at the same time from his state of innocency and from his dominion over creation. The former [can be repaired] by *religion and faith*, the latter by *arts and sciences*" (2 #52, 267, my emphasis).²¹⁷ Likewise, in *Cogita et Visa*, Bacon states, "in nature works are not only benefits to life, but pledges of truth. The rule of religion that a man should justify his faith by works applies also in natural philosophy; knowledge should be proved by its works. For truth is rather revealed and established by the evidence of works...Hence the human intellect and social conditions are enriched by one and the same means": works and faith.²¹⁸ Here Bacon makes it clear that he intends to unify science (works) and religion (faith) in order to regain mankind's "original condition" in a "kind of divine dialectic."²¹⁹ Thus Bacon's definition of "true religion" is reflected in the Hermetic precept that mankind can gain knowledge of God through performing "works," which both Bacon and the Hermetic texts define as the study of nature.²²⁰

²¹⁶ "Man" is the term employed by Bacon in his prose work to encompass all humankind. Thus, at times, I employ the same convention, especially in a sentence where I quote him directly.

²¹⁷ Here Bacon's use of religion and faith should be viewed in terms of his redefinition of religious thinking as "true religion" not in the particular orthodox Christian notion of faith, a notion which argued that God selected those whom he would save. When Bacon states that mankind's "innocency" can be repaired "by religion and faith," what he refers to is mankind's ability to use "the divine mind" (*NO* #23, 51) to attain to advancement of soul. In this Hermetic paradigm, Divine Mind=Soul whereas Human Mind="Crooked Mirror" (See *Idols of the Tribe* in *Novum*) which needs the study of nature to help train/cultivate the mind to be able to restore its senses to its former rank before the fall. In other words, one's ability to clearly use "the divine mind" involves his ability to use "the human mind" in conjunction with the practices of natural philosophy ("arts and sciences"). See the rest of this chapter for Bacon's definition of "true religion."

²¹⁸ Quoted in Webster, 324.

²¹⁹ In *Advancement*, Bacon aims to unify science and religion. He states that his plan seeks the "use of reason in religion" (214) and that "Here...I note this diffidence, that there hath not been, to my understanding, sufficiently inquired and handled the true limits and use of reason in spiritual things, as a kind of divine dialectic: which for that it is not done, it seemeth to me a thing unusual" (215).

²²⁰ In *Novum* I #129, Bacon argues that it is man's duty to "recover that right over nature, which belongs to it by divine bequest in a process that should be "governed by sound reason and true religion" (119).

Bacon's argument for the unification of religion and science (but a "true religion" and a "sound" science at that) stands in opposition to the Protestant precept of *Sola Fide*: justification through faith rather than works.²²¹ Ultimately, Bacon's argument for a new social order runs counter to the "rules" of the Protestant faith outlined by Luther and his successors. For instance, Bacon's argument, regarding the importance of studying nature to gain knowledge of God, contradicts the Protestant belief in *Sola Scriptura*: that only the Bible was the sole authority on God. Bacon's desire to know God involves direct participation with his creation, his "living word," not only the written one.²²² Additionally, the Protestant rules of *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Christus*—that salvation comes from grace alone and that one's atonement for sin occurs only through Christ's death—is not a belief that Bacon advocates. Although he does not openly condemn such beliefs, he clearly outlines in his essays and *New Atlantis* that individuals have the power to create their own salvation through such "works" as seeking self-knowledge,²²³ studying God's reflection in nature²²⁴ and the participating with God to become his co-creators.²²⁵

²²¹ The Protestant precept of *Sola Fide* broke with the theory sanctioned by the "Council of Trent" that faith and good works were co-ordinate sources of justification, with more attention being given to "works."

²²² In *Advancement*, Bacon states that Jesus promoted the study of both the Scriptures and the Book of Nature: "'you err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God'; laying before us two books or volumes to study, if we will be secured from error; first the scriptures, revealing the will of God, and then the creatures expressing his power; whereof the latter is a key unto the former: not only opening our understanding to conceive the true sense of the scriptures, by the general notions of reason and rules of speech; but chiefly opening our belief, in drawing us into a due meditation of the omnipotency of god, which is chiefly signed and engraven upon his works" (43).

²²³ In *Advancement*, Bacon argues that "knowledge of ourselves, which deserves the more accurate handling. This knowledge...is the end and term of natural philosophy in the intention of man" (109). Yet, as knowledge of the self "is but a portion of natural philosophy in the continent of nature," man must also study nature to find knowledge of himself and of God (109).

²²⁴ Bacon reveals in *Advancement* that God is everywhere in nature: "omnipotency of God...is chiefly signed and engraven upon his works" (43) and that man can learn about God: "the spirit of man is as the lamp of God, wherewith he searcheth the inwardness of all secrets" (7).

²²⁵ In *Advancement* Bacon illustrates this line of thinking when he states that human beings should be "an imitation of divine nature, but [also] a pattern of it" (180).

Bacon's plan for new social order illustrates that prayer and giving thanks to God are of utmost importance (the Protestant precept of *Soli Deo Gloria*: all glory is to be given to God alone); yet, as illustrated in Bensalemite action in *New Atlantis*, they are only part of the equation to finding the "holy temple" of knowledge.²²⁶ Faith in God alone is not the only path to salvation. Clearly, Protestant beliefs did not supply Bacon with his vision for a new social plan. Of course, the notions of Protestant charity and neighborly love are important for individuals' embodiment of the divinity within.²²⁷ Yet, Bacon's vision for the re-establishment of mankind's original condition (the status as god in human form) is influenced and nourished by the re-discovered Hermetic philosophy, which teaches the way to creating personal salvation.

Consequently, Bacon's plan for a reconstruction of knowledge integrates the scientific focus on fact-gathering and experimentation with the Hermetic ideal that humanity can become co-creators with God. Bacon's *Essays*, *Novum Organum*, *The Great Instauration*, and *The Advancement of Learning* help us to interpret the rhetorical objective of his Utopian fiction *New Atlantis*. His new model of society depends upon the unification of the Hermetic philosophy and new scientific ideas, the old and the new world paradigms. Bacon's definition of "sound reason" is his new scientific inductive method, which calls for the use of senses, imagination, and reason, and his definition for

²²⁶ In *Novum*, Bacon states: "I am not raising a capitol or pyramid to the pride of man, but laying a foundation in the human understanding for a holy temple after the model of the world" (109). Here he states that his goal in trying to create a "heaven on earth"—a "holy temple after the model of the world"—is not motivated by pride or for external glory but in his desire to fulfill individuals true role as mortal gods. The Bensalemites in *New Atlantis* reveal that praying and giving thanks to God are very important activities in their daily pursuit for obtaining knowledge of God and knowledge of themselves as mortal gods. The Father of Solomon's House states: "We have certain hymns and services, which we say daily, of laud, and thanks to God for his marvelous works: and forms of prayers, imploring his aid and blessing for the illumination of our labours, and the turning of them into good and holy uses" (83). Yet, clearly, the Bensalemites believe that prayer alone does not provide the way to God; this pathway involves individual action and participation with God through his creation.

²²⁷ For further discussion on Protestant charity and its connection with one's proof of faith and grace, see Elmer and Grell, 50-60.

“true religion” is influenced by the Hermetic precept that human beings are mortal gods.

In this vein, Bacon reveals that the construction of knowledge needs to combine elements from all three traditions: religious, secular, and occult in order to be fresh, alive, and balanced upon a solid foundation.

From Anticipation of Mind to Interpretation of Nature: Defining “Sound Reason”

Bacon appropriates and then transforms certain aspects of classical and contemporary ideology. He unifies the classical deductive method (relying on imagination) with his inductive method (relying on the senses and reason). Bacon’s “sound reason” is exactly this marriage between classical and contemporary ideologies. In order to learn what resides in nature’s “inner chambers,”²²⁸ individuals need to move in successive stages from the visible to the invisible. In other words, they need to perform vexations of art by using instruments to dissect objects in nature. This section will *set up* a foundation for understanding Bacon’s ultimate goal for the new science: the unification of religion and science. For Bacon, individuals and society need to properly understand the world around them before they can obtain a true and deep spiritual understanding of self and God.

Bacon’s Destruction and Recuperation of Past and Contemporary Epistemology

Many early modern philosophers were divided in their understanding of Bacon’s new scientific aim; many highlighted his material aims whereas others saw only his spiritual aim. Seth Ward and John Wilkins studied Bacon through the experimental

²²⁸ In *Novum 2* #7. Bacon says his contemporaries were “lingering in the outer courts of nature,” and he sees that their method of learning would not prepare them to make their way into her inner chambers (127).

spectacles of high science while John Webster²²⁹ studied Bacon through the lens of the occult. According to Webster, Bacon's plan for a new society helped to generate Rosicrucian ideals and Puritan millenarianism.²³⁰ On the other hand, Ward and Wilkins argued that Bacon denounced occult philosophy in favor of the new science. Indeed, Bacon did attempt to separate himself from many occult philosopher's practices and ideologies. Yet Bacon's method was continuously one of destruction and recuperation: he attempted to tear down the prevalence of ancient and contemporary methods in order to extract only the elements from them that could help rebuild learning upon a more solid foundation—where the ultimate aims of the occult philosophers (transmutation and recuperation of bodies in nature) would no longer be thought of as empty illusions or demonic practices, but rather as valid enterprises with evident repeatable procedures.

Bacon's rhetoric reveals that he interprets the hidden principles of nature in a non-traditional occult manner. In other words, he reorganizes and reverses occult philosophers' methods; for in his time, occult philosophy had become a hotbed for quacks and cozeners, mere spiders and reasoners who could only spin cobwebs out of their same ideas. As Bacon details in *Advancement* (1605), his aim is to eliminate the gaps in knowledge; he attempts to revive the abused name of natural magic to be “purged from vanity and superstition” by reversing the classical syllogistic method (94).²³¹

²²⁹ This John Webster (1610-1682), not to be confused with the playwright, was a Paracelsian chemist who rejected the Aristotelian scholasticism of education at Oxford, contending that an education in the allegories of Plato and Hermes was better suited to revealing the mysteries of God's creation.

²³⁰ See Ormsby-Lennon, 328. Millenarianism is defined as the coming of a time of great peace and prosperity with the arrival of the messiah. Lutheran Augsburg Confession of 1530, the English Forty-Two Articles of Religion of 1552, and the Reformed Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 repudiated millenarianism. Yet William Twisse, Joseph Mede, and John Cotton are all said to promote the millenarian vision. See Jeffrey. Dr. Lamont advanced the theory that millenarianism derived largely from John Foxe.

²³¹ For Bacon, magic is classified as applied science, mankind's legitimate power over nature.

In *Novum*, Bacon critiques Aristotelian, Platonist, and occult philosophers' tendency to draw down philosophy from heaven to earth—to move from general, more abstract ideas formed from imagination and reason (and of course their book learning) before turning to the particulars in nature.²³² He argued that while alchemists were seeking after knowledge of God's creation in order to imitate his works—a noble work that helped individuals to perform the Hermetic trope of self-mastery—they accepted results produced by chance.²³³ Their methods were weak because they relied too heavily on imagination to produce knowledge rather than incorporating a balance between their senses, their imagination, and their reason. Bacon proposes that to create a foundation solid enough to bolster successive stages of knowledge acquisition, individuals must reverse the current methodical process and move from particulars to generals (the process he called the Interpretation of Nature) instead of moving from generals to particulars (the process he called the Anticipation of Nature). In opposition, Bacon argued that to be true interpreters of nature, people must first set aside their imaginations and reason, and with indifference, gather particulars from nature before they could then re-employ their imaginations and reason. In this way, Bacon redefines classical *tenche* (the knowledge of how to make things) from an art of discovering opinions and abstract generalizations to shape a new *techne* that relies on experimentation of the natural world to understand nature's laws and movements rather than those laws constructed by human design.

In *Advancement*, Bacon parallels the fable of the golden chain with the occult philosophers' methods to argue that humans “ought not to attempt to draw down or to submit the mysteries of God to our reason; but contrariwise to raise and advance our

²³² *NO* 1 #96, 93 & #19, 43.

²³³ *Ibid.* 1 #8, 40.

reason to the divine truth” (93). Examples of how the occult philosophers tried to draw down mysteries of God from heaven is seen in their belief in sympathies and the microcosm / macrocosm paradigm. Bacon was highly suspect of sympathies and antipathies because many occult philosophers created sympathies more readily between things without active scrutiny via experiments. Bacon indeed recognized that there were sympathetic vibrations between things, where one vibrating body could set a similar body into vibration. Yet he argues in *Novum* that we should not assume “the consent between the motions and changes of [such things as] the moon and the affections of bodies below” except “as may be gathered and admitted, after strict and honest scrutiny, from experiments in agriculture, navigation, medicine” (2 # 50, 264). Bacon’s argument here is not to deny the existence of sympathies, but rather to show the necessity for exhaustive experimental study of sympathies before assuring their existence and function.

Additionally, Bacon argues that the Hermetic concept of the microcosm was “fantastically strained by Paracelsus and the alchemists, as if there were to be found in man’s body certain correspondences and parallels, which should have respect to *all* varieties of things, as stars, planets, minerals” (*AL*, 113, my emphasis). Bacon agrees that, out of all the bodies in nature, mankind’s was the most compounded and he sees value in the conviction that all bodies in nature are biform: that “man has somewhat of the brute, the brute somewhat of the plant, the plant somewhat of the minerals; so that all natural bodies have really two faces, or consist of a superior and an inferior species” (*Wisdom* “On Pan or Nature,” 237). Although there may be similarities between metal and human bodies, making such a general claim that one could study metals to find *exact* knowledge of human bodies created superstitions and false directions.

Additionally, Bacon takes issue with the occult general view that *all* metals have an intention to be gold, which nature herself would perform if she did not have impediments. In *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626), Bacon agrees with the vocabulary of the alchemists that sulfur and mercury are the two great families of things that have given rise to all matter because this knowledge provides the foundation for individuals to potentially change, transmute, or alter such objects as metals. Yet, he disagrees with the argument that nature intends to make all metals gold, claiming that this notion is the power of the mind to concoct and delude based on the wishes and passions of the thinker. As Katharine Park illustrates, Bacon argues that the occult philosopher's imagination became more than nature; it ruled it.²³⁴ In his view, occult philosophers such as Paracelsus appropriated from Plato the process of manipulating the world through imagination. Bacon argues that imagination alone cannot be trusted because it may join things which in nature are never found together and it may separate things which in nature are never found apart. However, he illustrates that the imagination should not be eliminated altogether; rather it should be harnessed in its powers and used in conjunction with reason. This is Bacon's answer for every human action: not to eliminate or destroy but rather to harness and focus.

Bacon's rhetorical arguments in his essays reveal that while human beings need to start from the beginning in their pursuit for knowledge,²³⁵ there were stages in his inductive method that called for imagination, metaphor, and analogy. In other words, both the occult way of knowing (internal/symbolic) and scientific way of knowing (external/literal) had their place in helping individuals gain truth about themselves and

²³⁴ See Park, 293.

²³⁵ In a similar fashion to Aristotle, Bacon argues that individuals need to first use only the senses before they could activate their reason.

the universe. As Brian Vickers reiterates, Bacon's inductive method was ready to use analogy and conjectures; when the senses would fail, analogy and similarities by gradual approximation could provide information on invisible processes until they could be verified by the senses and experiment.²³⁶ Bacon called this appropriate use of analogy "Instances of the Lamp,"²³⁷ intimating that just as a lamp is useful to orient one with his surroundings, so too is analogy useful to help one locate the proper path of knowledge.

In *Novum*, Bacon asserts that imagination and analogy (the internal and symbolic) should act as intermediaries between sense and reason; they should be used to raise new questions and suggest ways to answers these questions before the reason takes over in the next step of investigation; further in this process, rhetoric should be used to correct reason's deficiencies in its transactions with imagination before it (reason) carries over interpretations to the will to stimulate action. Here Bacon changes the role of rhetoric, away from the classical method of framing popular arguments, to create visual reality out of the investigations of nature. Ronald Levao points out that later scientists such as Kepler misinterpreted Bacon's method and attacked all hypotheses as fiction-making.²³⁸ Yet, Bacon sees that if science is to be progressive, it must allow, at certain stages, assumption and unverified data. He argues that novel inventions, such as the compass, gunpowder, and silk, were created by joining imagination and reason.²³⁹

Bacon's critique, that the occult philosopher's of his day took the microcosm concept too far, stems from his argument that once individuals have "adopted an opinion," they have a tendency to "draw all things else to support and agree with it" (*NO*

²³⁶ See Vickers, 500.

²³⁷ In *Advancement*, Bacon states that man has the ability to know God through his "inner God lamp": "the spirit of man is as the lamp of God, wherewith he searcheth the inwardness of all secrets (7).

²³⁸ See Levao, 10.

²³⁹ *NO* 1 #109, 101.

1 #46, 50).²⁴⁰ He exclaims that as an individual “can’t fit a garment without measuring the body,” he cannot know the inner workings of things without studying the particulars of each and every object. He warns that the more people remove themselves from particulars, the more they come to error. This is why he states that people should first study matter (physical objects) before forms (more abstract notions) because people come to error when they begin with forms before they truly know anything about them.

Yet, Bacon qualifies that advancement in understanding is eventually to take place beyond surfaces to the occult workings of things but only when people have gained extensive knowledge of surface things. In *Instauratio* (1620), Bacon assures men that “they will not be kept for ever tossing on the waves of experience,” for “when the time comes for the intellect to begin its work, it may find everything the more ready” (*GI*, 29). But until this time, mankind needs to extract knowledge “not merely out of the depths of his mind, but out of the very bowels of nature” (23). So before individuals can learn about the form of anything, they must first observe motions in things.²⁴¹ And since the mind is not a clear glass (made cloudy by Adam’s Fall) but rather “like an enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture, if it be not delivered and reduced” (*AL*, 136), no “power of the judgment can unravel” the properties and processes of nature without the “clue of experience” (*Wisdom*, “Daedalus, or Mechanical Skill,” 270). Therefore, in Bacon’s new epistemology, the proper method for gaining knowledge involves moving in

²⁴⁰ I am aware many readers of this work may feel tempted to direct back to me Bacon’s words: man has a tendency to “draw all things else to support and agree with it.” I understand that I see the Hermetic strain in Bacon’s works because I am specifically looking for it. So yes perhaps, I am over-analyzing and supplying a deeper interpretation than may have been originally intended. But one cannot deny the similarities in language and symbolism between the Hermetic texts and *New Atlantis* that I discuss in the remainder of this chapter. I would share Bacon’s other claim in *Novum* that just as one “can’t fit a garment without measuring the body,” one can’t know the inner workings of things without dissecting and studying the particulars. This dissection of the parts is what I perform here.

²⁴¹ *NO* 1 #17, 152.

successive stages starting first with the senses (the process of inquiry), then proceeding to imagination and reason (the process of skeptical induction), before engaging rhetoric to move the will to act (to experiment and produce creations). Bacon's argument for these successive stages illustrates his attempt to marry the intellectual experience with the physical and to unify the classical and medieval separation of the mind and body.

According to Bacon, the way people can "deliver" and "reduce" the enchanted glass of their minds is by freeing their minds of "idols" before starting any knowledge acquisition. Then after teaching the mind to be aware of its own prejudices and self-centered assumptions, human beings can begin knowledge acquisition through the vexations of art—through using instruments in experiments and through the mental activity of the inductive method. Bacon claims that the "secrets of nature reveal themselves more readily under the vexations of art than when they go their own way" (*NO 1* #98, 95). According to Bacon these vexations of art are "as the bonds and handcuffs of Proteus," which reveal that bodies "will not be destroyed or annihilated, rather...they will turn themselves into various forms" (*Description* #5, 228). So Bacon's new natural philosopher seeks, like the alchemist, to have Proteus' knowledge of past, present, future: the understanding of the effects and sum of what things do, have done, and can do by discovering the properties, changes, and processes of matter.²⁴²

Bacon's ultimate goal for his new learning method is, like the occult philosopher, to be able to take his knowledge of nature's effects and properties in order to participate in the act of creation and effect changes and transformations in bodies found in nature. Bacon makes a common literary analogy between mankind and the ant, the spider, and the bee to explicate the differences between his new proposed natural philosopher and the

²⁴² See "Proteus, or Matter," in *Wisdom*, 258.

ones currently calling themselves interpreters of nature. Those who are like ants are empiricists who only collect and use what they gather. Those who are like spiders are reasoners, philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, or Paracelsus who make cobwebs out of their own substance. Those who are like bees are Bacon's new natural philosophers who gather material, digest, and then transform things by their own power.²⁴³ But in order to get to the stage where individuals can be like the bee, they have to change their methods to reach complete knowledge of nature's works. For Bacon states, "No one can endow a given body with a new nature, or successfully and aptly transmute it into a new body, unless he has attained a competent knowledge of the body so to be altered or transformed" (*NO 2* #65, 127). This is why he has the scientists in *New Atlantis* dissect nature to know how it works before they can make "motions" (creations) of their own. These scientists are able to command nature to reveal her secrets because they obey her laws and motions. They make imitations and multiplications of light and motions in nature by being Interpreters rather than Anticipators of nature. In this way, Bacon's scientists turn philosophy into practice: they make Bacon's argument, "For the end which this science of mine proposes is the invention not of arguments but of arts," a living reality (*GI*, 21).

By performing vexations of art, human beings can begin the process toward gaining competent knowledge of nature. Ultimately, Bacon attempts to get all natural philosophers of his day to be like the bee, to use their competent knowledge to form new creations. For Bacon, this is only possible if the new scientific work is done by the organized efforts of many in successive stages. So unlike occult philosophers as Cardan, Agrippa, Ficino, and Paracelsus who assigned excessive weight to solitary labor and

²⁴³ *NO 1* #95, 93.

authority, Bacon's natural philosopher knows that he is but one among many whose task is to fulfill a role within the entire process, a process which he argues should be governed by "sound reason," with steps that include the senses, imagination, reason, and action. Yet the process for knowledge acquisition does not stop here; it continues again in ascending and descending order, with axioms pointing their way to new particulars, new investigations, and new experiments.²⁴⁴

Bacon's vexations of art do not include what later natural philosophers, such as Leibnitz, have imposed on his method—that individuals should "put nature on the rack" to rape her and even make her barren in the process. Bacon makes it quite clear on multiple occasions that "nature to be commanded must be obeyed" and that the new method does not work to "vainly overrule" her (*NO* 1 #3, 39 & # 129, 119). He uses the term "vexare" to mean investigations in order to mold, harness, and command nature. The term "vexare" in Latin translates to "shaking," "agitation," and "disturbance." As Peter Pesic illustrates, English uses of vexation contemporaneous with Bacon were "troubling," "afflicting," and "harassing," as Jonson's *The Alchemist* illustrates in the description of the alchemical work.²⁴⁵ In this way, Pesic argues that "vexation" does not equal sheer brutality of nature. For Bacon, to force nature would elicit false confessions. This is evident in his interpretation of Vulcan's attempt to rape Minerva, where he criticizes alchemists who overheat their work and create imperfect and lame works.²⁴⁶ To command nature by "obeying" her, alchemists or natural philosophers should use regulated and varied heat so as not to cause fractures in the vessel; in other words,

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I #103, 97.

²⁴⁵ See Pesic, 90.

²⁴⁶ See Bacon's "Daedalus, or Mechanical Skill" in *Wisdom*, 294.

interpreters of nature should use “handcuffs” (instruments) to imitate the natural warmth of the womb (natural movements of nature).²⁴⁷

Similarly, in *New Atlantis*, Bacon illustrates that nature must be obeyed in order to harness knowledge of nature. The scientists of Solomon’s House do not “rape” nature in order to learn how to imitate nature’s motions; rather in dissecting nature, they obey her laws and principles. In claiming that the scientists of Solomon’s House present false representations of nature,²⁴⁸ Robert Faulkner misunderstands Bacon’s view of artificial and natural correspondence. Like the occult philosophers, Bacon believes that individuals have to engage with objects in nature, draw out the hidden elements within objects in nature, in order to truly *see* nature. For Bacon, nature “betrays itself more readily under the vexations of art than in its natural freedom” (*GI*, 28). In this view, the artificial does not differ from the natural in form and essence but only in the effect of motion. Bacon argues that “art” helps us see all the faces of nature; for matter in nature is like Proteus, continuously changing shape, and it is through art, through using instruments, that humans can harness these shapes and change them into yet another one of nature’s faces. By performing these changes in nature, human beings can experience and restore their original god-like nature: “the mind of man and the nature of things...[will] be restored to [their] perfect and original condition” (*GI*, 1).

Although Bacon does not give a detailed account of the activities of the wise men of Solomon’s House in *New Atlantis*,²⁴⁹ they, without doubt, applied Bacon’s

²⁴⁷ *AL*, 93.

²⁴⁸ See Faulkner, 132.

²⁴⁹ Bacon does allude to Bensalemite scientists’ scientific procedure in their titles. There are Merchants of Light who gather information from the light of nature and from other countries’ inventions; there are Lamps who perform new experiments—their title as “Lamps” recalls Bacon’s argument about the appropriate use of analogy to help one locate the proper path of knowledge, which he called “Instances of

hermeneutics of “sound reason” in order to perform action such as: to imitate the heat of the sun and heavenly bodies, to imitate flights of birds, to create many different types of demonstrations of all light and radiation, or to demonstrate sounds in different directions and distances. For in order to imitate something such as light, these men had to first understand how light functions and in what circumstances light may be refracted (making use of Bacon’s three tables/lists of rejections and exclusions) before they could harness knowledge of light to create various multiplications and reflections of visual beams. The scientists in *New Atlantis* dissect and study nature in order to learn how to multiply and enhance the nature of things, not to dominate or deceive,²⁵⁰ but rather to obtain their goal of transforming human beings into the mortal gods they knew them to truly be. The belief that human beings are innately mortal gods who need to know themselves as gods by way of the study of nature is central to the Hermetic mode of thinking, a belief system that only the occult philosophy nourished while orthodox religion suppressed.

Toward the Perfection of Mankind’s Divine Nature: Defining “True Religion”

Bacon’s proposal for “sound reason” is only half of his vision for the Great Instauration; the other half is his idea of “true religion.” If we take into consideration that *New Atlantis* is Bacon’s “model,” his “machine,” for how individuals could produce “great and marvelous works for the benefit of men,” as argued by his secretary W.

the Lamp.” Furthermore, there are Interpreters of Nature who, counter to the Anticipators of Nature, first use their senses before engaging reason and imagination in the process. See pages 81-2 in *New Atlantis*.

²⁵⁰ So what then did the scientist of Solomon’s House mean when he said that the men of the House “do not show any natural work or thing, adorned or swelling; but only pure as it is, and without all affection of strangeness” (80)? “Adorned” or “Swelling” here refers to false apparitions and illusions. The narrator is told that the scientists know how to create impostures, illusions, fallacies, and deceptions of the senses in the “houses of deceptions of the senses” (80). Yet, they learn how to create these false apparitions in order to know completely how they are false; this is consistent with Bacon’s insistence of knowing the operations of all things thoroughly. So when the scientist tells the narrator that the men of Solomon’s House only show nature as “pure as it is,” he means that they do not give the people of Bensalem intentional impostures or illusions of nature, but “pure” works that are gained from laboring directly with matter, with nature’s many protean faces. In other words, the Bensalemites are not given false medicines or false instruments to use in their daily activities.

Rawley in his 1627 publication (36), then we should ask how Bacon's reversal of the Christian/Scientific timeline contributes to his goal to help mankind restore things to their "perfect and original condition" (*GI*, 1). In Bensalem, the coming of science preceded the coming of Jesus by almost 300 years, as Bensalem was scientifically thriving when King Solamona ruled in 288 BCE. But why is science present before religion? Why integrate religion at all when Bensalem was already thriving as a scientific community for nearly 130 years prior to Christianity?

I suggest that Bacon's reversal of the Christian/Scientific timeline illustrates his goal in trying to ground religion upon a scientific platform; for religion²⁵¹ without science fails to understand one very important component about humanity's role on earth: that mankind can regain its original god-like nature in the earthly experience.²⁵² Conversely, in a scientific world without religion, human beings fail to truly "consider what are the true ends of knowledge"—that individuals should study nature in order to know God and to know the self as god (*GI*, 16).²⁵³ Studying nature and performing works of one's own was a way to experience "the Word made flesh."²⁵⁴ The true ends of knowledge produce an earthly paradise where human beings can restore all things to their original divine nature. And this is exactly what Bacon attempts to illustrate in his *New Atlantis*: a land that mirrors "the visible light as the first fruits of creation"—truly a reflection of heaven on earth in his eyes (*GI*, 32). The travelers regard Bensalem to be "a picture of our salvation in heaven," "the land of angels," "the virgin of the world," and "God's bosom"

²⁵¹ Here I refer to orthodox Christianity that dominated the social sphere of Bacon's time. By no means am I insinuating that all religions have denounced a belief in mankind's divine identity.

²⁵² Furthermore, in *Advancement*, Bacon argues that imagination is more prevalent than reason: "in matters of faith and religion, we raise our imagination above our reason" (125). Thus, it is important to integrate both religion (with its engagement with imagination) and science (with its engagement with reason).

²⁵³ In *Advancement*, Bacon states: "they need medicine, not only to assuage the disease, but to awake the sense. And if it be said, that the cure of men's minds belongeth to sacred divinity, it is most true" (171).

²⁵⁴ John 1:14

(in the words of the Father of Solomon's House). These metaphors illustrate that Bacon intends to provide a model for individuals to learn how to unify a new form of reason with a new form of religion to ultimately create heaven on earth (45, 46, 66, 83). Bacon creates a world that the travelers describe as being "beyond the old world and the new"; this new world has become the hybrid of the two (43).²⁵⁵ In other words, Bacon's vision involves transforming the world into a mirror image of the divine whereby mankind's identity as a mortal god may be re-established.²⁵⁶

Bacon's definition for "true religion" then should be understood as the human implementation of the belief that mankind is divine. "True religion" is the combination of religious thinking and scientific endeavors²⁵⁷ to perpetuate the belief that is reflected in the Hermetic texts: "By looking at what you yourself have in you; for in you too, the Word is Son and the Mind is Father of the Word...Now fix your thought upon the Light...and learn to know it"; for "knowledge is the perfection of science, and science is the gift of God" (CH I, 49, CH X, 80).

A Hermetic Reformation of Secular and Religious Ideals

It is advantageous to unfold the occult discursive situation of Bacon's time to illuminate *why* he would be drawn to the Hermetic philosophy and *what* aspects of the philosophy he integrated in his new epistemology. Bacon wrote *New Atlantis* in 1626, the year of his death, in an environment where other utopian and occult philosophical texts were expressing similar desires for an existence of a brotherhood that would transform the arts, sciences, politics, and religion and that would re-establish the

²⁵⁵ Bacon argues for a synthesis of old paradigms with new ones to generate advancement: "the kingdom of heaven is like a good householder, that bringeth forth both new and old store" (AL, 131).

²⁵⁶ Bacon asserts humanity should become "an imitation of divine nature...[and] a pattern of it" (AL, 180).

²⁵⁷ For Bacon, mankind has not yet sufficiently employed "the use of reason in spiritual things" (AL, 215).

understanding that humans could restore their image as mortal gods. Tommaso Campanella, in his utopia *The City of the Sun* (written in Italian in 1602 with a 1613 Latin translation and a 1623 English translation), attempted to prophesize in the veiled language of astrology that the Spanish Kings, in alliance with the Pope, were destined to be the instruments of the Divine Plan.²⁵⁸ Similarly, in *New Atlantis*, Bacon created a vision of a society that he hoped James I, to whom he dedicated *Advancement and Instauration*, would institute in the New World.²⁵⁹

Additionally, anonymous Rosicrucian texts²⁶⁰ (1614-1616) espoused similar beliefs that individuals could regain their god-like image through the reconstruction of arts and religion. These texts combined Hebraic-Christian mysticism, in an attempt to

²⁵⁸ The prophecy of a divine plan had long been associated with the conquest of the New World. The Spanish took the motto *plus ultra* to illustrate how they had extended over the territories of the New World, thereby undoing the *ne plus ultra* motto of the ancient world, which established the western limits, symbolized by the Pillars of Hercules. The New World for many writers became internalized in terms of humanity's hope for a new start away from the wars of politics and religion that plagued both Europe and England. Many Renaissance utopias like Campanella's employed occult language and practices, such as astrology and magical divination, to help usher in a new design for humanity's future whereas other New World texts such as Marvell's "Bermudas" discussed the new world as humankind's answer to leave behind the political and religious wars in Europe.

²⁵⁹ In many millenarian texts, James I was equated with Solomon who would found the New Jerusalem.

²⁶⁰ The Rosicrucian movement, which arose in 3rd generation Lutheran countries that aimed at completing the Lutheran Reformation, was a syncretism of Hermetic and Christian doctrines. Rosicrucianism promoted the Hermetic belief that the physical body was under the direction of the inner body. The 17th-century German Rosicrucian pamphlets, the *Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis* (the authors of the *Fama* declare: "our Philosophy also is not a new invention, but as Adam after his fall hath received it, and as Moses and Solomon used it."), *Confessio Fraternitatis* (Thomas Vaughan, twin brother to poet Henry Vaughan, translated the *Fama* and the *Confessio* in 1652 into English from German), and *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rozenkreutz*, illustrate the necessity to have a public body governed by its inner body; in other words, these texts depict a working community that has allowed its collective inner body to direct the actions of the outer body; since every individual effectively governs himself, the body of the community is effectively directed not only in regards to moral action but also in regards to training the soul as illustrated in the Hermetic texts. The Rosicrucian goal was to awaken the feeling of the divine presence within all mankind: first by abolishing the monarchy and instituting rule by a philosophical-theological elect—those who were advanced in training their souls, second by reforming scientific knowledge, and third by discovering the universal panacea—which is the obtainment of knowledge that upholds health of the body and the spirit. The Rosicrucian movement is symbolized by the rose which refers to the soul and a cross which refers to the body of four elements. The meaning behind this symbolism is that the human soul is crucified on the cross of the material plane. The connotation of "crucified" here does not mean "death" but rather a process of spiritual regeneration; the body provides the vehicle, the means from which the soul can experience this transformation. This Rosicrucian symbolism finds its roots in Hermetic philosophical-theological teachings that mankind's aim in this existence is to undergo a spiritual rebirth in order to gain understanding of God.

join physical and spiritual alchemy, Cabala, and scientific advances with Protestantism. These Rosicrucian manifestos recall Bacon's method of learning put forth in *Advancement*. The first text, the *Fama* (1614) opens with a call to all men of knowledge, that they may be united in order to collect from the Book of Nature a perfect method for all arts and sciences—words reminiscent of Bacon's argument for the Great Instauration. The first paragraph explains that the fraternity was involved in the renewal of all arts,²⁶¹ that exploration and navigation to parts of the world never discovered and the opening up of previously unexplored parts of nature go hand in hand because they were ordained by God to occur together in the same age,²⁶² that the restoration of learning is not to be credited to any one individual but to the age itself,²⁶³ that the accomplishing of the instauration will allow man to know why he is called the microcosmus,²⁶⁴ and finally that the age had already seen men who were dedicated to the *new learning* and further exploration.²⁶⁵

Roughly thirty years after Bacon's death, John Heydon felt so strongly that Bacon's *New Atlantis* depicted the Rosicrucian brotherhood that he rewrote the text in his *Holy Guide* (1662), adding lines to Bacon's text such as: "I am by Office Governor of this House of Strangers, and by vocations I am a Christian priest, and of the Order of the Rosie Cross" (14). In 1972, Frances Yates was the first scholar to show parallels

²⁶¹ The renewal of all arts is reiterated in all of Bacon's texts.

²⁶² In *Advancement*, Bacon explains that exploration and new understanding of nature were ordained by God to occur in the same age (84).

²⁶³ Bacon states this idea more specifically in *Instauratio*, 17 and *Novum* 1 #113, 104.

²⁶⁴ Bacon never states that man should know why he is called microcosmus, but he claims that human beings need to restore their minds to their original perfect condition and recover their right as commander/governor of nature in *Instauratio*, 1 & in *On Natural and Experimental History Aphorism* #10, 284. This idea is found in the second Rosicrucian text, the *Confessio Fraternitatis* 1615, which explains that their work was to transform the dark arts that have grown false from the Fall.

²⁶⁵ *AL*, 84, my emphasis. I would argue that the Hermetic philosophical-theological paradigm that individuals can come to know God and know the self as God through the art of studying and participating in nature helped to propel the New Science forward. See Appendix IV for an illustration of the similarities between the Rosicrucian *Fama* and Bacon's *Advancement*.

between the Rosicrucian manifestos (1614-1616) and Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1626).²⁶⁶

Whether Bacon was appropriating symbols and meanings from the Rosicrucian texts, whether the Rosicrucian texts were appropriating from Bacon's new plan for learning, or whether Bacon had a hand in creating the Rosicrucian texts is not important to this discussion. For what these similarities reveal is that during the 17th century, many authors, sharing similar occult symbols and ideas, were attempting to issue forth a reformation in secular and religious ideals through the perspective of the occult philosophy rather than through the Christian or Humanist strain.

Between 1614 and 1620, about 400 manuscripts and books were published which discussed the Rosicrucian manifestos. Many people wrote letters and advertisements, attempting to gain access into the fraternity. This produced such an uproar that in 1623 an anonymous pamphlet was published, attacking the reputation of the fraternity. This pamphlet, entitled "Horrible Pacts Made between the Devil and the Pretended Invisible Ones,"²⁶⁷ claims that 36 invisibles were dispersed about the world in groups of 6. The text states that at the assembly at Lyons on June 23rd, two hours before the Grand

²⁶⁶ In *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, Yates illustrates 1) that as the scroll handed to the travelers in Bacon's text was signed with a stamp of Cherubim's wings and by them a cross, so too was the *Fama* sealed at the end with the motto: under the shadow of Jehovah's wings and a cross, 2) that an official in Bacon's story wears a white turban with a small red cross on top, which is similar to the rosy cross symbol of the Rosicrucians found in the *Chymical Wedding*, the third Rosicrucian text which Christian Rosenkreutz rode with the Knights of the Golden Stone bearing snow-white ensigns with a red cross, 3) that as the sick travelers were cared for by Bensalemites for free, so too did the fraternity brothers heal the sick gratis, and 4) that as members of Solomon's House in Bacon's text were sent out dressed in the attire of the countries they visited, adapting their habits to the countries' to pass unperceived, so too did the Rosicrucian fraternity brothers wear habits without distinguishing marks to travel the countries undetected (165-66).

²⁶⁷ These "invisible ones" represent the "Invisible College," which was a precursor to the Royal Society. It consisted of a group of natural philosophers including John Dee, Robert Boyle, John Wilkins, John Wallis, John Evelyn, Robert Hooke, Tycho Brahe, Christopher Wren, and William Petty. In a letter to Samuel Hartlib, Boyle refers to the invisible college as "our invisible college" or "our philosophical college." The society's common theme was to acquire knowledge through experimental investigation. The college's ultimate goal was a millenary recovery of the knowledge that humanity had lost after Eden. The College of the Six Days' Works in *New Atlantis* resembles the "Invisible College" of Bacon's day and the "invisible ones" in this "Horrible Pacts" pamphlet.

Sabbath, a demon made the 36 invisibles imitate the accusations made against the Templars and made the invisibles prostrate themselves, swearing to abjure Christianity. And for selling their souls, they obtained the power to travel with full pockets to wherever they wished and were granted the eloquence to attract dupes for the Devil. The text also states that these 36 invisibles could not be recognized because they wore ordinary attire (this is taken directly from the *Fama*). It is interesting that the authors of this text claim the Rosicrucian brothers were not Christians and that they made pacts with the devil. Additionally, it appears that the authors used the fraternity's interest in the 36 invisibles as a tactic to scare the public of the Rosicrucian brotherhood's demonic anonymous presence in the world.

What do these 36 Invisibles have to do with Bacon? To fully answer this question, we must understand how significant the Jewish Cabala was in helping usher forth a new form of Christian thinking. The Cabala,²⁶⁸ introduced into Renaissance occult philosophy by Pico della Mirandola, was integrated with Christianity and Hermeticism to become *part* of the core of Renaissance occult philosophy. The Christian Cabala appropriated the 36 Decans, called Righteous Men, from the Jewish mystical Cabala which according to tradition, had appropriate them from the oral Hermetic

²⁶⁸ Cabala is the Hebrew name for the secret interpretation of the Jewish scriptures in a mystical sense, which were said to have been handed down from Moses. Renaissance occult philosophy carried on the mystical medieval belief that the secret teachings, the Jewish Cabala, were given to Moses on Mount Sinai and were preserved in the Ark of the Covenant and then transmitted to Solomon, who was thought to possess knowledge of the mysteries of creation. The Jews of Bensalem practice the Jewish esoteric philosophy of the Cabala, and unlike the Jews in Europe, they do not hate Christ, which illustrates that they practice the Christianized form of the Cabala. See Joabin's discussion that the Jews in Europe have a "secret inbred rancour against the people [Christians] whom they live amongst" (65). Joabin, the Jewish merchant, whom the narrator sees as learned in wisdom and well versed in the laws and customs of Bensalem, explains that the Jews by tradition believe the people of Bensalem are descended from Abraham by his son Nachoran, and that their laws were given by Moses, which "by a secret cabala ordained the laws of Bensalem which they now use" (65). Nachoran, spelled Nahor or Nachor, was one of Abraham's brothers. See Genesis 11:22-26, 22:20-24 & Luke 3:34.

tradition.²⁶⁹ These Decans were considered to be the 36 lofty souls present in every generation who sustained, nurtured, and guarded hidden light—God’s light depicted in Genesis 1:3. The Jewish Cabala teaches that these Decans help to disseminate the light throughout the world. Similarly in the Hermetic texts, the Decans stand round about all things in the cosmos as guardians, holding all things together, and watching over the good order of all things.²⁷⁰ Renaissance Cabalists Ficino and Agrippa helped to imbed the Decans in European occult philosophy, as they saw that these Decans were spiritual beings who spread “light” in order to help bring human beings back into the knowledge that they are mortal gods.

Perhaps these 36 Hermetic spiritual beings are reflected in Bacon’s description of the scientists of Solomon’s House as 36 “invisibles” in *New Atlantis*. The 36 scientists of Solomon’s House²⁷¹ are reminiscent of the 36 Decans in that they are also hidden men²⁷² who guard and disseminate the *light* of knowledge to make sure that things are executed

²⁶⁹ From 1st-century Alexandria, the Decans entered Arabic sorcerous lore, primarily in the early medieval text *Picatrix*. *Picatrix* was the name used in Christian Europe for a talismanic magical text originally written in the 10th or 11th century. Under the name *Picatrix*, the work became available in the West through a Latin translation of the 13th century, based on an earlier Spanish translation, both of which appear to have been produced at the court of Alphonso The Wise (See Pingree). According to Eugenio Garin, the Latin version is as indispensable as the *Corpus Hermeticum* for understanding the production of the Renaissance philosophy and arts (47). It has significantly influenced West European magical thinking from Marsilio Ficino in the 1400s to Thomas Campanella in the 1600s.

²⁷⁰ See *Sto VI*, 161.

²⁷¹ These 36 men form the two major professions of natural philosophers: some to be pioneers and some smiths, some to dig and some to refine and hammer. Twelve men, called Merchants of Light, sail to foreign countries under the names of other nations to bring back “light” (knowledge, not goods) from other parts of the world. Three men, called Depredators those who pillage, collect experiments in all books. Three men, called Mystery Men, collect experiments of art. Three men, called Pioners or Miners, try new experiments. Three men, called Compilers, list the experiments made by the Pioners into tables to draw out observations and axioms. Three men, called Dowry Men or Benefactors, perform the experiments that the compilers listed to see how to apply them as useful to man’s life and for discovering further secrets of nature. Three men, called Lamps, take the knowledge from former labors and collections to direct new experiments of higher light (taking knowledge of particulars to see universals). Three men, called Inoculators, men who bud trees, execute the experiments from the Lamps and report them. Three men, called Interpreters of Nature, create axioms from the experiments of the Inoculators.

²⁷² They are hidden sometimes for 12 years at a time.

properly in the country of Bensalem.²⁷³ Bensalemites regard Solomon's house, with its 36 scientists, to be the very "soul" of Bensalem, which is reminiscent of the Decans as the 36 lofty souls.²⁷⁴ This idea is further illustrated in the priests' words that Solomon's House is the "eye of the kingdom" (48), a reference not lost on Bacon's contemporaries as eyes were believed to be the entrance to the soul.²⁷⁵

Bacon's scientists are considered to be the very soul of Bensalem because they study the presence of God's light in nature. Central to Bacon's argument for obtaining salvation is the gathering and analyzing of "light." In his prose works, Bacon aligns knowledge with light. In *Novum*, the natural philosopher's ultimate goal is to discover "new discoveries...sought from the light of nature (112), which he defines in *Advancement* as the use of reason with inward instinct: "the light of nature is used in two several senses; the one, that which springeth from reason, sense induction, argument, according to the laws of heaven and earth; the other, that which is imprinted upon the spirit of man by an inward instinct, according to the law of conscience, which is a sparkle of the purity of his first estate" (213). Additionally, in "Of Atheism," Bacon's idea that "little philosophy inclineth men's minds to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion" (59) explains that studying nature in depth is the pathway for mankind to gain knowledge of God and of human beings' original and perfect

²⁷³ These men are hidden in that they work in the House unseen by other Bensalemites, sometimes for twelve years, See *New Atlantis*, 69.

²⁷⁴ Even though the 36 invisibles from the pamphlet "Horrible Pacts" (which explains that there will be 36 invisibles dispersed about the world in groups of 6), doesn't correspond exactly to Bacon's 36 men (12 of which only travel about the world), both texts share the same possible inspiration from the Christian Cabala and *Hermetica*. This is not to say that Bacon was definitely influenced by the occult numerology here; for the number of men needed to perform the scientific work of Solomon's House may have coincidentally added up to this number. Yet, when we combine this possible symbolic reference with other symbolic meanings (such as the meaning of "Son") in Bacon's fiction, the textual and rhetorical evidence bespeaks that elements of the Hermetic philosophy were influencing Bacon's new epistemology.

²⁷⁵ Similarly, in Matthew 6:22, eyes are depicted as the lamps of the body. If the eyes were sound, the entire body would be full of light.

condition.²⁷⁶ Similarly, the Hermetic texts promote that Light is God, which is found in all things.²⁷⁷ By studying the light (by studying objects in nature which are the reflection of God), human beings can come to know God;²⁷⁸ thus they can come to know God's Word, the knowledge of who God is.²⁷⁹ And once they can know God's Word, then they can work to embody the Word, to make the Word manifest in their whole being.²⁸⁰ Thus, they are able to restore their original god-like nature and become Sons of God.²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ See "Of Atheism" in *Wisdom*.

²⁷⁷ See CH I: "The Light...the first God, who was before the watery substance which appeared out of the darkness" (49); CH III: "The Good is the archetypal Light; and the Mind and Truth are...rays emitted by that Light" (58); CH III: "it is the light whereby soul is illuminated" (58); CH V: "He presents all things to us through our sense, and thereby manifests himself through all things" (64). CH XII: "Everywhere God will come to meet you, everywhere he will appear to you" (91).

²⁷⁸ See CH V: "You can behold God's image with your eyes, and lay hold on it with your hands" (64); CH I: "Now fix your thought upon the Light...and learn to know it" (48); and CH XII: "if you do not make yourself equal to God, you cannot apprehend God" (90). Ultimately, this Son of God definition is illustrated in the Old Testament. In Hosea 1:10, the people in Israel who were rejected at the time are later called the "Sons of the living God." Additionally, in Psalms 82:6, it is written that those in Israel: "All are gods, and sons of the Most High" (John later ascribes this title to only Jesus in 10:34-8). Although the title of Son or Sons of God is reserved only to Israel in the OT and to Jesus in the NT, what the Hermetic and other Gnostic texts illustrate is that in antiquity and again resurfacing in the Renaissance, with the reintroduction of the *Hermetica*, is the belief that all men have the capability to become the Sons of God.

²⁷⁹ Both the Bible and the Hermetic texts explain that God is light; the only difference between the meaning conveyed in these texts is that John 1:7 states mankind cannot completely be in the presence of the light except through Jesus the Christ while the *Corpus Hermeticum* states that all people have the light within which they can learn to know and manifest themselves. I John 1:1-7 states: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not tell the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." CH I states: "The Light...the first God, who was before the watery substance which appeared out of the darkness; and the Word which came forth from the Light is Son of God...By looking at what you yourself have in you; for in you too, the Word is Son, and the Mind is Father of the Word" (49). "Now fix your thought upon the Light...and learn to know it" (48). In Exodus, "light" is characterized as God's self-manifestation and in Psalms it is his salvation. In this view, God manifested the "light" from himself and it is through living according to his Word that one can be saved through God's "light."²⁷⁹ While medieval Christianity placed much emphasis on receiving salvation only through Jesus the Christ, the more unconventional reading of the Bible illustrates that one can attain salvation through the "light" of God, or through the Word of God.

²⁸⁰ See CH I: "By looking at what you yourself have in you; for in you too, the Word is Son, and the Mind is the Father of the Word" (49); CH XIII: "we have been made gods" (101); and CH I: man "willed to make things for his own part also; and his Father gave permission, [for man to have] in himself all the working of the Administrators" (49).

²⁸¹ See Bacon's *Instauratio*: the "mind of man and the nature of things...be restored to its perfect and original condition" (1) and "the mind may exercise over the nature of things the authority which properly belongs to it" (7). See CH I: "The Word which came forth from the Light is Son of God...By looking at what you yourself have in you; for in you too, the Word is Son" (49).

Bacon's New Philosophy is precisely the process by which human beings can come to know the Word by studying the light of nature.

The very name, Bensalem, the land that has been transformed into a heaven on earth, is derived from the combination of "Ben," which is Hebrew for "son," and "saalem," which is Hebrew for "peace." "Saalem" is related to Solomon (peace be with him), and we must remember here that Solomon was called "the Son of God" by God himself in I Chronicles 17, 22, 28. In Jewish scripture, the term "Son of God" referred to one's closeness with God not that a person was god or that he shared in divinity. Yet in both Gnostic and Christian discourse, the term "Son of God" signified that a person had knowledge of God, a person who was both close to God and who shared in his divinity. Knowing the Word and having "light" or "knowledge" of God is thus one's ability to embody the Gnostic idea of a "Christ within."²⁸²

Bacon's rhetorical strategy for placing "ben" before "saalem" becomes emblematic because it signals to readers that they should focus not only on Solomon's character as "wise" but also on Solomon's title as "Son of God." This allusion to "Son of God" is thus transferred to the community in *New Atlantis*. We are to understand here that the members of the community have the same title because they have obtained more divine knowledge of God, a superior knowledge of God's creation, than any other nation. This community has embodied the Hermetic trope of self-mastery by becoming the *walking images of God* in a land they have created to be "a picture of [their] salvation in heaven" (NA, 45). Bacon's allusion to "ben" and "Solomon" here illustrates that he includes the Gnostic understanding of "Son of God," to refer to one's embodiment of divinity, in

²⁸² See footnote 24 on page 9 for discussion of Gnostic and Biblical texts that promoted the "Christ within" concept.

order to emblematically endorse the Hermetic mode of thinking and to institute this mode of thinking within a new epistemology for learning.

This new learning calls for mankind's active role in creating its own salvation. And this is where Bacon's incorporation of the Hermetic spiritual beings, called the Decans, enhances our understanding of the process for becoming the "Son." The 36 scientists of Solomon's House work to discover and then disseminate the light/knowledge of God that they gained through their study of nature. The scientists called Merchants of Light exchange money for "light"—described as other countries' knowledge and uses of nature. Once the scientists gather and experiment with the light, they publish (disseminate) this knowledge for the benefit of the rest of the community. Thus, their role in the story is to serve as *enlightened*²⁸³ beings who guide the rest of the community to obtain salvation by becoming mortal gods.

In working to discover the light of nature, the scientists of Solomon's House help initiate the rest of the community to attain to knowledge of God and become Sons of God. The scientists pass on knowledge that they have gained from their study of nature to the Bensalemites and the Bensalemites in turn put this knowledge into practice. The Feast of the Family is a ceremony that honors a family for using the scientists' discoveries to effectively nurture thirty descendents above the age of three. The head of the family chooses a son or daughter by their merit to raise them to the status of Son of God in the ritual called the Son of the Vine. This chosen son or daughter receives the title Son or Daughter of Bensalem. In the ritual, the father blesses his chosen sibling with these words: "Son of Bensalem, (or Daughter of Bensalem,) thy father saith it; the man

²⁸³ Forgive the pun here: "enlightened" depicts the scientists' status as Sons of God because they have fully embodied God's light through their study of nature and their selves.

by whom thou hast *breath* and *life* speaketh *the word*; The *blessing of the everlasting Father*, the Prince of Peace, and the Holy Dove be upon thee, and make the days of thy pilgrimage good and many” (64, my emphasis). Here the son undergoes initiation into becoming the Son of God as he has learned to *live* and *breath* the Word of God. To illustrate this new status as Son, the symbol of the sun (representative of the sons) and a crescent (representative of the daughters) are placed on top of a cluster of grapes (hence the title Son of the Vine) and given to the son or daughter who is being initiated with knowledge and light of God, which is here referred to as God’s *Word*, “the blessing of the everlasting Father.”

The sibling chosen to undergo initiation is most often a son as the title of the ceremony suggests, the Son of the Vine. Yet, Bacon adds the title Daughter of Bensalem in a parenthetical reference directly after the son’s title. In relegating “daughters” to parentheses (Daughter of Bensalem), is Bacon simply accounting for those rare cases where there are no sons old enough to undergo initiation in this family ceremony? Or could this be a fortunate moment when Bacon attempts to integrate women into the new paradigm of personal salvation? The Hermetic texts highlight everyone’s ability to attain to personal salvation; yet, in English translation, “everyone” is referred to as “man” or “men.” In Renaissance convention, “man” was synonymous with “human.” Yet, Renaissance intellectuals did not mean to include women in this definition; the focus was entirely on man. For instance, when Pico reiterates the Hermetic philosophy in his statement in *Oration*, “there is nothing to be seen more wonderful than man,” he is truly referring only to man not humankind and certainly not woman (par.7).²⁸⁴

284 Shakespeare’s Miranda uses language that includes all people not just “man.” In using the terms, “mankind” and “people,” Miranda signals to her male audience that it is quite easy to use nouns that do not

Certainly, Bacon in his prose works uses “man” more prevalently than “mankind,” for specifically Bacon addresses a male readership. Yet, his inclusion of “daughters” may signify his attempt to insinuate that women should not be excluded from human agency in acquiring knowledge of God. Those siblings who are chosen to become Sons of Bensalem are chosen because of their “eminent merit and virtue” (64). Thus, in including women, even in the marginal space of parentheses, Bacon illustrates that women too, because of their merit and virtue, may rise to the status as Daughters of God. In this way, even though the majority of Bacon’s readership is male, Bacon’s inclusion of women to his new social plan signals to his smaller female readership and of course to his larger male readership that the future of social change should allow women to have access to the same divine initiation.²⁸⁵ Since fiction can draw attention to Bacon’s use of parentheses, perhaps this is a sign that Bacon was cautious of his audience’s reactions against placing “daughters” on equal measure with “sons.” In fiction, Bacon can subtly make his point regarding mankind’s ability to embody its divinity without having to make readers feel that he is forcing his views on them. Thus characters create a form of distance from author to readers so that readers feel free to listen to what characters say, unencumbered by direct author presence. Furthermore, fiction provides readers with an individual intellectual experience, allowing readers to develop their own mental picture of Bacon’s plan for society based on characters’ words and actions.

exclude women: “O, wonder! / How many goodly creatures are there here! / How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, / That has such people in ’t!” (5.1.197-200). Even though the new world she refers to here is one where only men are present (unless Ariel’s ambiguous gender implies another female-like presence), Miranda’s language models a better all-inclusive language to audiences.

²⁸⁵ Furthermore, Bacon illustrates a form of gender equality in his plan for new social order when he has the priest/governor state that the Father’s sons and daughters are ordered according to “their years without difference of sex” (62).

Thus, in encountering a radically new society for the first time with the narrator and his crew, readers begin to envision Bacon's new society through the narrator's words. Bacon's readers are more likely to identify themselves with the narrator as he is of a similar background (European) and of the same time period (early 17th century); thus his readers are more likely to "see" with the same eyes as the narrator and "feel" as persuaded as he that Bensalem is indeed a paragon of self-mastery that humanity should work to emulate. Thus, in having the narrator explain that the Feast of the Family ceremony is "a most natural, pious, and reverend custom" (60), Bacon signals to readers that they too should agree with this sentiment. And through readers' agreement with the usefulness of the ceremony, readers have either intentionally or unintentionally agreed to the inclusion of women in his a new social plan. Bacon realizes that to transform an established convention, he must subtly integrate new ideas. Thus through the visual component of parentheses on the printed page, the majority of Bacon's readers (males) feel more comfortable that women are not expected to be on equal terms.

Furthermore, in having the narrator recount his travels in Bensalem, Bacon is able not only to give his audience a mental image of how individuals (and society as a whole) could obtain their own salvation, he is also able to persuade them to become invested in his new social plan. In this identification process, readers find themselves being initiated along with the narrator in the process of *becoming* a Son of God. We are to understand that the narrator is in the process of becoming a Son through his title as "son."²⁸⁶ Unlike

²⁸⁶ The Father of Solomon's House calls the narrator "son" twice in a matter of three lines: "God bless thee my son; I will give thee the greatest jewel I have. For I will impart unto thee, for the love of God and men, a relation of the true state of Salomon's House. Son, to make you know the true state of Solomon's House..." (71). Further he states, "These are (my son) the riches of Salomon's House" (80) and "God bless thee, my son...I give thee leave to publish it for the good of other nations; for we here are in God's bosom, a land unknown" (83).

the Son and Daughter in the Family of the Feast, the narrator is called “son” with a lower case “s” because he has not yet attained to personal salvation. As it is not enough to know/believe, rather one must also embody/perform (“not an opinion to be held, but a work to be done” *GI*, 16), the narrator will not obtain the title “Son” with a capital “S” until he has embodied the Word—until he experiences for himself that “human Knowledge and human Power, do really meet in one” (*GI*, 32). In comparison to stage drama, fiction is able to present this distinction between a lower and upper case “s.” Thus, through the subtle markings on the printed page, Bacon can walk his readers through the stages of initiation that he sees necessary to regaining one’s god-like nature.

Once immersed in the presence of the Bensalemites, the narrator begins to perceive their divine identities. When the narrator, who was first skeptical of the safety of the island and peacefulness of the Bensalemites, becomes convinced that “God surely is manifested in this island,” readers too become convinced that Bacon’s new plan for society is “beyond both the old world and the new” (43). Bacon depicts a land that is “somewhat supernatural” “but yet rather as angelical than magical” for it is a world that mirrors the divine on earth (51). Thus when the narrator praises the Bensalemites’ practice of “reverence of a man’s self,”²⁸⁷ which propels individuals to respect the self as god-like, so too do readers feel themselves being called to emulate the same behavior:

²⁸⁷ Bensalemites’ usual saying or mantra is “that the reverence of a man’s self is, next religion, the chiefest bridle of all vices” and that he “whosoever is unchaste cannot reverence himself” (68). In *Advancement*, Bacon expresses similar views that reverence for the self is the best form of government. He argues that man’s duty is “the regiment and government of every man over himself, and not over others” (166) and that “the sum of behavior is to retain dignity without intruding upon the liberty of others” (183). Furthermore, Bacon adds that charity is also important in self-government when he says, “love teacheth a man to carry himself...if a man’s mind be truly inflamed with charity, it doeth work him suddenly into greater perfection than all doctrine[s] of morality” (180). In *Advancement*, Bacon illustrates the concept of having “reverence for oneself” when he states, “the sum of behavior is to retain a man’s own dignity, without intruding upon the liberty of others” (183) and “for it concerneth the regiment and government of every man over himself and not over others” (166).

“let...every man reform his own ways” (43). Thus, both the narrator and readers are being initiated into the mysteries of *what* the scientists and the rest of the community do to make themselves “a mirror in the world worthy to hold men’s eyes” (60).

While the scientists explain to the narrator and readers the research practices that allow them to perfect things “greater much than their nature” (74), the priest/governor guides the narrator and readers through the Bensalemite community bodily health practices. As illustrated in the Feast of the Family, the Bensalemite community works to put the scientists’ research into communal practice; they work to “cure [the body] of diseases” and to restore “man’s body from arefaction” and “confirming” (strengthening) (73). Because of the community’s attention to material perfection, Jerry Weinberger argues that Bacon’s new plan for social order is solely dependent upon scientific and material aims rather than any spiritual ones. He contends that the Feast of the Family is an “honor recogniz[ing] mere longevity and fecundity, not any excellence of soul” (xxiv). He claims that their dedication to attain to immortality is focused on generating the “most intense pleasure that accompanies the procreation of human bodies” (xxiv). Although pleasure of procreation may be part of the scenario, this does not fully describe the motivation behind Bensalemite art of bodily endurance.

The Bensalemites devote their energies for physical longevity in order to expand their knowledge about God’s creation, his Word, and their own intended identities as mortal gods. The purpose of Solomon’s House is to help individuals learn how to keep the body healthy long enough to gain knowledge of God’s creation: “The End of our Foundation is the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of the Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible” (71). In this

way, I suggest that the pursuit of immortality is precisely a study achieved through excellence of the soul.²⁸⁸ For Bacon argues, while “the body of man [was] the object of [Christ’s] Miracles...the soul was the object of his doctrine” (*AL*, 116). Thus, individuals should work to advance both human being’s bodies and their souls because soul purification cannot be fully completed unless body, the soul’s vessel, is healthy to support the workings of the soul. In perfecting their physical bodies and the world around them, the Bensalemites illustrate the Hermetic tenet that the body provides the vehicle, the means to embody one’s God-self within.²⁸⁹ For in perfecting not only their minds and thoughts but also their bodies to reflect mankind’s original divine condition, the Bensalemites indeed work to make their souls thoroughly reflect God’s image.

Bacon’s goal for combining knowledge and power together to effect immortality²⁹⁰ reflects a discussion of human power in the Hermetic texts: “Why, O Men of the Offspring of the Earth, why have you delivered yourselves over unto death, having power to partake of immortality? Repent and change your minds, you that have together walked in Error, and have been darkened in ignorance. Depart from that dark light, be partakers of immortality, and leave or forsake corruption” (*CH I*, 54). The scientists of Solomon’s House learn how to extract medicine from plants and minerals for the prolongation of life. And the Feast of the Family reveals that all people in Bensalem, not

²⁸⁸ Bacon states in *Advancement* that “the good of advancement is greater than the good of simple preservation”; but “to preserve [bodies] with advancement is the greater” (165). Here he argues that working to preserve the health of the body, working for immortality, is a grand goal because this action advances people’s knowledge of God and of themselves as divine.

²⁸⁹ This concept of the body as a vehicle is reminiscent of the Rosicrucian goal: to awaken the feeling of the divine presence within by pursuing knowledge that would help individuals uphold health of the body and spirit. See *Tablet*: “The father of all the teleme of this / world is here. His force and power is perfect, if it / be turned into earth.” See Appendix I. The concept that “the earth is [a] nurse” reinforces the idea that matter is needed to help the soul realize/experience its perfection; the earth, like mankind’s body, is the vessel or vehicle that allows the soul to experience a living manifestation of itself.

²⁹⁰ See *GI*, 32.

just the scientists of Solomon's House, are concerned with the Hermetic goals of longevity and self-purification. As Karl R. Wallace points out, Bacon hoped human being's bodily movements both external and internal might eventually be understood in terms of their functions and sources of stimulation in order to gain knowledge of the parasitic action of non-vital spirits that feed on particles of matter and cause decay; for if this action could be controlled, Bacon believed, life could be extended.²⁹¹ And if life could be extended, the more human beings could learn about God's creation and just how much humanity is made in God's image.²⁹²

Thus the pathway that leads to personal salvation involves the study of nature and the pursuit of immortality. Bacon's view that God is found everywhere in nature²⁹³ and his view that humanity can study all things in nature to gain knowledge of God and knowledge of the self as a mortal god²⁹⁴ is uniquely a Hermetic teaching in origin. Bacon argues in *Instauratio* that society should "try the whole thing anew upon a better plan, and...commence a total reconstruction of sciences, arts, and all human knowledge...[so that they may] no longer float in air, but rest on the solid foundation of experience" (3 & 6). This reflects his goal to make the study of nature the pathway to achieve the "true ends of knowledge" (21), which involves the probing and dissecting of nature in order to participate in creating new forms, the "vincitur" step in Bacon's new scientific process.

²⁹¹ See Wallace, 25.

²⁹² Both Bacon and the *Hermetica* illustrate that the study of nature is the process by which one may see the image of God: "But he who has learnt what things are, and how they are ordered, and by whom, and to what end, will give thanks for all things to the Maker" (*Sto* IIB, 152). This is reflected in Bacon's goal for Solomon's House. Since God created the world within six days, the House was instituted to the "finding out of the true nature of all things, whereby God may have the more glory in the workmanship of them, and men the more fruit in the use of them" (58).

²⁹³ In *Advancement*, Bacon states "the omnipotency of God...is chiefly singed and engraven upon his works" (43).

²⁹⁴ Bacon reveals that man can gain knowledge of God when he states, "the spirit of man is as the lamp of God, wherewith he searcheth the inwardness of all secrets" (*AL*, 7). He reveals that individuals should become the mortal gods they were intended to be when he states, human beings are "an imitation of divine nature, but [also] a pattern of it" (*AL*, 180).

In other words, one must experiment to find the “genuine light of nature” in order to transform all things to reflect God’s image (*GI*, 24).

Bacon’s “vincitur” step is the process of participating in acts of creation so that human beings can learn to be mortal gods (truly a reflection of God). This reflects the Hermetic tenet: “if then you do not make yourself equal to God, you cannot apprehend God; for like is known by like”²⁹⁵ (CH XII, 90).²⁹⁶ *New Atlantis* depicts individuals who have successfully learned how to be mortal gods; they have been able to make themselves “equal to God”²⁹⁷ by performing creation acts of their own. The Hermetic philosophy espouses, “this earthly part of the universe is kept in order by means of man’s knowledge and application of the arts and sciences. For God willed that the universe should not be complete until man had done his part” (CH I, 121). “His part” here refers to humanity’s role in learning how to become the mortal god that human beings were intended to be: “we have been made gods” (CH XIII, 101).²⁹⁸ This is expressed in Bacon’s work in multiple ways, most notably in his argument that human beings can become “partakers” of God’s vision (*GI*, 32), “human Knowledge and human Power, do really meet in one”

²⁹⁵ Ultimately, the philosophy that human beings need to make themselves “equal to God” is reflected in Jesus’ teachings. In John 5:17-29, Jesus tells the Jews: “My Father has worked even until now, He has never ceased working; He is still working and I, too, must be at divine work.” John wrote that the Jews responded with great anger as they thought Jesus was “not only breaking (weakening or violating) the Sabbath, but He actually was speaking of God as being in a special sense His own Father, making Himself equal (putting Himself on a level) with God.” Jesus further illustrates the precept that individuals may be “equal to God” in verse 21: “Just as the Father raises up the dead and gives them life (make them live on), even so the Son also gives life to whomever He wills and is pleased to give it.” He proclaims that all men can become the Son and obtain this power in verse 24 and 26: “I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the person whose ears are open to my words (who listens to my message) and believes and trusts in and clings to and relies on Him who sent me has (possesses now) eternal life...For even as the Father has life in Himself and is self-existent so He has given to the Son to have life in Himself and to be self-existent.”

²⁹⁶ See also CH I: “Father gave permission” that man could “make things for his own part,” to have “[with]in himself all the working of the Administrators”—the same Decan spiritual beings who guard and protect the world (49).

²⁹⁷ See CH XII: “if you then do not make yourself equal to God, you cannot apprehend God” (90).

²⁹⁸ Remember also CH X “we must not shrink from saying that a man on earth is a mortal god, and that a god in heaven is an immortal man” (84).

(*GI*, 32), and that individuals can regain the “true powers of the mind” and can restore all “to its perfect and original condition” (*GI*, 1).

The Hermetic philosophy and Bacon’s goal for a new society have similar aims: to illustrate to humanity that gnosis is seen in the act of understanding and God in the act of creating. Bacon’s rhetoric, in *Advancement*, *Novum*, and *Instauratio*, illustrates his disagreement with the orthodox Christian tenet that humans can be saved only by divine intervention. It is through human effort not divine intervention that individuals can recover the divine-like images they had before the Fall. In this way, Bacon helped the new science to gain independence from divine providence. Yet, whereas God is either remote from the natural world or perceived as irrelevant altogether for such new scientists as Galileo,²⁹⁹ Bacon argues that true understanding of God is the ultimate purpose for studying the natural world.³⁰⁰

The argument that humans can obtain their own salvation through human effort not divine intervention is central to both the Baconian and Hermetic argument that human beings can become mortal gods, self-determining beings. Although the authors of the Hermetic texts were writing ancient knowledge in the advent of Christianity, a Christ savior is absent from this philosophy. Hermes is a teacher and a guide who relates the teaching, not specific to any scripture of fixed dogmas, that each individual is his own “savior.” The absence of a savior figure in the Hermetic texts provided an alternative

²⁹⁹ In the Old Testament (2 Isaiah and Job), God’s hand is no longer evident in nature. In the New Testament, St. Paul in Romans 1:20 argues that since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities (his eternal power and divine nature) have been clearly seen. Here St. Paul gave scriptural authority to what would later become the late medieval pre-scientific concept of the Book of Nature: God’s signs are immanent in the world. During the Renaissance, the occult philosophy nourished the idea that God’s presence could be seen and felt in nature. Yet, Puritan providentialism and mechanist materialism argued conversely that God could not be seen in nature; rather the movement of nature was caused by God’s power outside of nature.

³⁰⁰ Remember Bacon’s: “Concerning Divine Philosophie, or Naturall Theologie, it is that knowledge...concerning God, which may be obtained by the contemplation of his creatures” (*AL*, 92).

outlet for Renaissance philosophers who sought to go beyond the limits of orthodox religious beliefs. They found in these texts visions of humanity's close relationship with God.³⁰¹ Thus, Renaissance occult philosophers de-emphasized Christ's role as savior in order to emphasize his role as teacher. Bacon's integration of Renaissance occult philosophy's views on Christ helped him to redefine the role of Christianity in his plan of a new society. This redefinition is found in Bacon's "true religion": a combination of Christian Protestant values of charity and reverence for God with the Hermetic belief in humanity's ability to obtain personal salvation (to become mortal gods).

Bacon consciously abstracts Christ's role as mankind's savior in *New Atlantis*. Bensalemite Christians do not rely on Christ for their own salvation and the Christians and Jews in Bensalem live in harmony with one another. Neither religion adheres to sacramentalism specific to the religious doctrines of Bacon's day. Rather, Bensalemite Jews ascribe to the esoteric vein of Mosaic Cabala. Furthermore, the Christian rituals of prayer are infused with the Hermetic belief that "everywhere God will come to meet you." Both Bensalemite Christians and Jews espouse the Hermetic tenet that in order to see and know God, individuals must first learn about the nature of things³⁰² because God is in all things.³⁰³ Bacon blends Bensalemite Christianity and Judaism in order to create

³⁰¹ Protestantism advocated a close relationship with God in that individuals no longer needed the Church to absolve their sins; they could pray directly to God. Yet, whereas Protestant belief stripped individuals of any power to create their own salvation (Bernard of Clairvaux, who heavily influenced Luther and Calvin, states in *Vita Prima* 1.12.57: "I admit that I myself am neither worthy nor able to obtain the kingdom of heaven by my own merits"), the Hermetic philosophy nourished and advanced the belief that mankind's true identity was as a mortal god, God's co-creators. Question 25 of Westminster Larger Catechism states that because of the Fall, human beings became utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good and that he was wholly inclined to all evil. Protestantism nourished the view that humans were born sinners. It is in this oppressive atmosphere (where individuals are limited by their sinfulness) that philosophers began to seek alternative philosophies regarding divine humanity.

³⁰² See CH I, 47.

³⁰³ See CH IV, 63.

receptivity to the Hermetic belief that one gains salvation through “study of the Works and Creatures of God” (58).

In having the Jews of Bensalem espouse reverence for Christ, Bacon is able to illustrate to his readers that a synthesis of religious beliefs will help advance society to reflect the divine world in the human. The Jewish representative in Bensalem, Joabin, tells the narrator that Jews in Bensalem believe that, since the king of Bensalem is successful in embodying his god-like self, he will sit at Christ’s feet in Jerusalem. The narrator’s response, “but yet setting aside these Jewish dreams,” illustrates that to the Europeans, it is only in a Christian dream that Jews would revere Christ; for as Joabin states, the Jews in Europe keep their “secret inbred rancour against the people [Christians] whom they live amongst” (65). Yet for Bensalemites, the integration of Christian and Jewish beliefs is not a dream; it is a reality. In having Joabin, the representative Jewish “wise man,” explain Bensalemites’ ability to synthesize religious beliefs and practices, Bacon is able to satisfy Christian readers’ expectations for Jewish conversion and Jewish readers’ desires for autonomous agency on an equal level with their Christian contemporaries. Yet, ultimately, Bacon’s tactic in creating a unified religion serves to illustrate to readers the necessity for coming together under one common purpose: to make the material world a mirror reflection of the divine world.

The Bensalemite Jews’ respect for Christ does not illustrate that they endorse the Christian emphasis on Christ as humanity’s savior. Stephen A. McKnight claims that the “chief difference between the Jews of Bensalem and the Jews of Europe is that the Bensalemite Jews expect the coming of the Messiah will usher in a New Jerusalem or a Kingdom of God on earth” (94). While McKnight is right in pointing out Bensalemite

Jews' integration of Christian beliefs with their own Jewish ones, he misunderstands Bacon's argument about "true religion." For in saying that the Jews of Bensalem expect Christ's return to bring forth God's kingdom on earth, he implies that these Jews share similar beliefs to the millenarian Protestants of Bacon's time: that mankind waits in needs of Christ's return and salvation. Yet, Joabin does not affirm that God's kingdom will finally arrive *with* Christ's return; he only declares, "when the Messiah should come, and sit in his throne at Hierusalem, the king of Bensalem should sit at his feet" (65)—this indicates Bensalem's wisdom and worthiness rather than their need to be saved by Christ. Bacon's deliberate extraction of any reference to the restoration of God's kingdom on earth *with* Christ's return is important here because it is another component of the liberated form of Christianity in Bensalem, one that finds its roots in Renaissance occult philosophy's appropriation of the Hermetic discourse.

In an attempt to restore an early form of Christianity and Hermeticism, the type of Alexandrine syncretism prevalent in the 1st centuries CE, Bacon constructs a new role for Jews freed from parochial Christian dogmas—a role that occult philosophers imitated as they made Jewish Cabalistic beliefs compatible with Christian ones. Bensalemite Jews have not converted to Christianity; they keep their own form of religion. Yet, they all give Christ many high attributes, calling him "The Milken Way" (the way leading to heaven) and the "Elijah of the Messiah" (the prophetic forerunner of the Messiah in Malachi 4:5 or Matthew 16:4, 17:10)—references which highlight Christ's role as teacher or guide just as the Hermetic texts had done with Hermes.³⁰⁴ This reference to "Elijah"

³⁰⁴ Bensalemite Jews' veneration of Christ as the Milky Way highlights his role a teacher; for it is through the application of his teachings that one's soul may find its way home. The idea of the Milky Way as the soul's pathway to its home, the connection between the soul and the stars, was already present in pre-Socratic Greece. Pythagorean followers believed that the sun and the moon were the Isles of the Blessed.

was a typical religious millenarian tactic to illustrate that the arrival of God's kingdom on earth will be heralded by Elijah and the conversion of the Jews to Christianity.

Yet, Bacon reverses the expectation for Jew conversion in order to indicate a new direction for society: to construct a new form of Christianity as well as a new form of Judaism. To this end, Bacon has the priest in Bensalem also function as the governor; this is the first indicator that the Bensalemites do not all ascribe to Christianity.³⁰⁵ In encompassing both the Christian expectation as priest and the Jewish expectation as lawgiver, the priest/governor becomes a symbol of the type of religious syncretism that Bacon desires to see in his new plan for society. Compared to the Jews during Bacon's day, Bensalemite Jews revere Christ as an important teacher and they integrate their mystical cabalistic beliefs with scientific ones in order to, like the Christians, learn how to become mortal gods. Additionally, compared to the Christians of Bacon's day, Bensalemite Christians do not expect the Jews to convert to Christianity and they, like the Jews, do not feel the need to ascribe to Christ's role as mankind's savior.

The scientists of Solomon's House and the citizens of Bensalem only make one specific reference to Christ but they do not employ the typical religious prayers, requesting for redemption. The Bensalemites' first exposure to Judaism and Christianity occurs in Renfusa city on the eastern coast of the Bensalem island with the appearance of

Heraclitus believed the soul was "the spark of sidereal essence," with the imagery of putting on and off planetary vestures as the soul ascended through the planets during the descent to earth. Empedotimus, whose story was recorded in Heraclides' dialogue, called the Milky Way "the way of the souls going through the heavenly Hades" to their home. See Culianu, 41. Additionally, Plato in *Republic* stated that the judgment of the souls takes place between the gates of heaven and the gates of hell. Their reincarnation takes place in the Field in the middle. The Milky Way was also described as the river Styx, which flowed upwards from Hades to the moon. In the Bible, the Milky Way is referred to as a fiery river under the Throne of God. See Daniel 8:10.

³⁰⁵ When the travelers approach the island, the priest/governor asks the travelers if they are Christians. The priest's/governor's question does not illustrate that Christianity is the preferred religion in Bensalem. Rather, this signals to readers that the governor addresses the travelers with their accustomed Christian ways in order to make the travelers feel at ease.

the pillar of light which brought forth, twenty years after Christ's ascension, an ark containing the books of the Old and New Testament, many more apocrypha books unknown to Europe, and a letter by Bartholomew. Renfusa is a combination of two Greek words, which mean sheep-natured or peaceful. The significance of the name seems to point to Bensalemites' worthiness and readiness to receive Christ's teachings just as Christ's flock was ready to hear his message in the NT. Yet, the Bensalemites were already an organized society dedicated to studying God's works before the arrival of these Christian texts. Thus their readiness to hear Christ's message does not indicate that they are morally in need of hearing his teachings but rather that they have *already put into practice* his message that "the kingdom of God is within,"³⁰⁶ that all beings can obtain their own salvation.

Furthermore, the inclusion of "Bartholomew" is another example of Bacon's attempt to de-emphasize the need for a "savior" figure in his vision for a new society. Historically in the Syrian tradition, Bartholomew's original name was Jesus, which he had to set aside as it was Jesus the Christ's name.³⁰⁷ It is interesting that Bacon would

³⁰⁶ Luke 17:20-21. Jesus teaches that the kingdom of heaven is approached through understanding (Mark 12:34), through acceptance like a child (Mark 10:15), through spiritual rebirth (John 3:5), and through doing the will of God (Matthew 7:21). Bensalemites have been able to create a heaven on earth (they have approached the kingdom of heaven) through their study of nature (God); they exhibit "acceptance like a child" in their tolerance of all religions and people; they undergo a "spiritual rebirth" in comparison to their "old" selves mirrored in the rest of the world—because they know that God is present in all things and that they too are God's co-creators; they create heaven on earth through the unification of science and religion; lastly, they perform the "will of God" through their learning his Word/Light (through the study of nature) and by learning how to become his co-creators, his mortal gods/Sons of God.

³⁰⁷ Bartholomew appears in the New Testament as one of the 12 apostles. See Matthew 10:3, Paul 3:18, Luke 6:14, and Acts 1:15. John does not list Bartholomew, but early in his account in 1:43-50, John tells of the call of discipleship for a Nathaniel (one of the earliest followers of Jesus who was clearly not the same as Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Judas Iscariot, Judas (Lebbaeus of Thaddeus) or Matthew whose calls are described differently in Matthew 9:9. Nathaniel is introduced in the book of John as a friend of Philip and Philip is paired with Bartholomew in the other 3 Synoptic Gospels. Bartholomew is a patronymic name; his full name was Nathaniel Bartolmai son of Tolmai. Eusebius of Caesarea in *Ecclesiastical History* said that Bartholomew preached in India and left behind a copy of Matthew's Gospel. When Clement went to Alexandria to study under Pantheus in 170 CE, he learned that Pantheus traveled to India and discovered that Indians attributed their belief to Bartholomew and Matthew's gospel.

have a “second Jesus,” so to speak, send the pure forms of the books of the Bible—pure in the sense that, as they were given to Bensalemites 20 years after Christ’s ascension, they were not yet defiled by age and time and by religious and political interpretations. Thus we should interpret the hidden message here that these biblical books disseminate the pure early message from Jesus that all people have the ability to create their own salvation—“the kingdom of heaven is within.” This is the message given in Gnostic texts, which were written around the same time as early Christianity. In naming a “second Jesus,” Bacon can emphasize Bartholomew’s and subsequently Jesus’ more important role for humanity as “teachers” or “guides” rather than as “saviors.”

Bacon’s *raison d’être* for having a “second” Jesus send the ark is to de-emphasize the promise of salvation with Christ’s return. Bartholomew is a fitting figure to have set the ark and books upon the sea; for, historically, he was the only one who was able to inquire into the mysteries of heaven and see what was hidden from others.³⁰⁸ Similarly to Bartholomew, the scientists of Solomon’s House are able to penetrate the mysteries of nature and discover what is hidden from many. Bacon aligns the scientists with Bartholomew to illustrate that intellectual investigation of nature enables the Bensalemites to supercede the limitations of orthodox Christian and Judaic doctrines.³⁰⁹

Therefore, Bartholomew becomes an important instrument in disseminating Christ’s teachings. Why then would Bacon use the reference to Bartholomew in *New Atlantis*? Since Bartholomew was the only one to have learned the mysteries of God, which were hidden from others (See *The Book of Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle* 5th/6th century, Coptic), he becomes the perfect candidate to illuminate the mysteries of the Son, Jesus the Christ. See James. These mysteries are reflected in Christ’s teaching as “the kingdom of heaven is within,” that every one has access to the divine. Therefore, it is fitting that Bacon would have Bartholomew send the Bensalemites biblical books (both the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments along with other NT books that were not written at the time (namely Acts, Paul’s Epistles, and Revelation of John) that detail these mysteries.

³⁰⁸ His *Gospel of Bartholomew* and *The Book of the Resurrection of Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle* both describe Jesus’ Descent into Hell, the Resurrection, and the redemption of Adam.

³⁰⁹ In this framework, Bacon transforms Christian supercession method introduced by Justin Martyr (100-165 CE) and Irenaeus (130-200CE): the act of relegating Judaism to an inferior position in order to highlight Christianity as the true Israel. In this way, Bacon illustrates that “true religion” in his new social

On first reading, the priest's account of Bensalem's conversion to Christianity may give readers the impression that Bacon endorses the orthodox Christian message of divine salvation. However, the story of Bensalem's conversion to Christianity illustrates their ability to integrate Bacon's ultimate rhetorical goal: to unite science and religion. In Bacon's mind, Bensalemite science provides the proper foundation for religious understanding. In placing science before religion, Bacon signals to his readers that the intellectual and investigative scientific mindset will help individuals understand the divine meaning within religious scriptures. In other words, the fact that Bensalemites receive Jewish and Christian scriptures does not indicate that Bacon thinks they need to convert from their "pagan" pre-Christian, scientific ways to the orthodox European Christian way in order to receive and understand God's wisdom. Rather, it reveals that with their scientific mindset (with their methodical and investigative training), they are able to correctly interpret God's message regarding mankind's divine nature.

The scientists of Solomon's House regard the miracle of the pillar of light³¹⁰ and the ark as "great sign[s]" that they already have the ability "to know [the] works of creation, and the secrets of them; and to discern" "between divine miracles, works of nature, works of art, and impostures and illusions of all sorts" (48). The ark with the books of the Bible are considered signs that the scientists already have the proper educational foundation from which to interpret the message in the books and to use that information for grace and reverence rather than for domination and control, something ancient Atlantis was unable to learn. For instance, the scientist states: "we ["those of our

order is a religion that supersedes both Judaism and Christianity. His "true religion" combines elements from both religions while it moves beyond them.

³¹⁰ The Pillar of Light in *New Atlantis* is reminiscent of the pillar of cloud in Exodus 13:21 where God's presence helped the Israelites escape the Egyptian Pharaoh.

order”] most humbly beseech thee to prosper this great sign, and to give us the interpretation and use of it in mercy; which thou dost in some part secretly promise by sending [the pillar of light which contains the ark and biblical books] unto us” (48). Thus, the ark does not function as a reference to Bensalem’s automatic salvation in the same manner that Christians teach Jesus saved mankind by dying on the cross. Rather, it functions as a symbol that science and religion need each other: first, religion without science neglects to promote human being’s agency in being co-creators with God, and secondly, science without religion neglects to promote that the study of nature is precisely the study of God in his many forms.³¹¹

Bensalem was a good-natured scientific country, dedicated to studying God’s works and humanity’s place in it as co-creator, before its conversion to Christianity. This is in direct opposition to the millenarian Protestants who looked forward to the time when Christ shall be made manifest so that mankind would be saved from sickness and death. The men of Solomon’s House were already extracting elements from the natural world to create remedies for sickness and to affect prolongation of life well before Christian texts arrived. In this way, Bensalemites perform a kind of self-mastery that is clearly grounded more in the Hermetic tradition than in an orthodox Christian one.

Bacon separates himself from the Christian reliance on Christ’s salvation because he sees that humans have a tendency to wait for Christ’s second coming instead of working for their own salvation. In Bacon’s mind, man needs to work “to recover his right over nature” rather than wait for the miracle of God to provide harmony and prosperity (*Description* #10, 284). In this way, the form of Christianity in Bensalem is

³¹¹ In *Advancement*, Bacon argues that moral philosophy needs natural philosophy in order to provide the means of educating the mind so that the human mind might aspire to and attain what is good.

one where salvation and material progress are accomplished together by human effort not divine intervention.³¹² This belief in human effort to regain one's divine image is a major component of Hermetic philosophy. Therefore, the ark becomes more of a symbol that aligns Bensalem with the plan for a New Jerusalem, rather than a gesture for their need of divine salvation. As the biblical Ark of the Covenant blessed the Jews as God's chosen people, the ark for the Bensalemites is symbolic of the fact that they have become God's new chosen people because of their dedication to studying nature to know God.

It is additionally significant that the people of Bensalem, as God's *new* chosen people, do not belong to any one specific ethnic or religious group, but to all Bensalemites: both Christians and Jews alike.³¹³ Here Bacon may be giving back to the Jews their sense of uniqueness as God's chosen, which becomes all the more important as the Jews were expelled from England in 1290 by Edward I. In the 1650s, encouraged by Oliver Cromwell, they were readmitted. However, the penultimate vision of Christian millenarianism—the final moment of Christ's return—is of a world without Jews, or at least a world in which Jews have ceased to exist as Jews because they have been converted to Christianity.³¹⁴ Therefore, in giving Jews their own major role in *New Atlantis*, Bacon does not reduce either Jewish or Christian authority; rather they are given equal weight and attention. Thus, Bacon's plan for the Great Instauration is universal in

³¹² This is the central theme in Bacon's myth of Orpheus in *Wisdom*, 252.

³¹³ These two religions are the only references to organized religion in *New Atlantis* most likely because they were the two most prominent in Europe during Bacon's time.

³¹⁴ Augustine in *City of God* laid out the main points of his thinking on the Jews: 1) although they deserved to die for their crime of deicide, Jews had to be allowed to live, but as wanderers, homeless and despised by all, like the biblical Cain; 2) God's covenant with the Jews was canceled by their rejection of Christ, and therefore the Christian church had become the new Israel, taking the place of ancient Israel. The Jews now existed only to serve the Christian church (See Krupnick, 359). In opposition, Bacon illustrates that the Jews have not lost their "covenant" with God and they certainly do not have to serve the Christian church, for both the Christians and the Jews in Bensalem share the same fundamental beliefs about Christ: that he was not humanity's savior but rather a teacher who showed the way to embodying one's divinity.

its aims; all of humanity needs to unite religion and science, not Christians or Jews alone, and certainly not the English or Europeans alone.³¹⁵

Conclusion: Fiction as Candlelight of Truth

Bacon shaped his own rhetorical situation out of prior discourses. He recognized the shortcomings of classical, religious, and humanist epistemologies and attempted to create a new system of knowledge that investigated God's/nature's laws not simply laws created by human design. In establishing a new direction for the acquisition of knowledge, Bacon deemphasizes the Christian teaching that human beings are base and corrupt beings in order to emphasize the Hermetic precept of humanity's power and ability to regain its divine-like status. Similarly to Shakespeare, Bacon promotes the practice of spiritual alchemy that human beings may transmute their base thoughts and actions into divine ones. Additionally, Bacon promotes the transmutation of base and corrupt institutional practices into more spiritual and advancing ones.

In arguing that individuals could achieve their divine-like status again, Bacon deemphasizes the Christian teaching that human beings fell because they sought after forbidden knowledge to advance learning beyond the previous limits of knowledge. Thus Bacon's plan for a new social order includes a liberated form of Christianity not wholly practiced by orthodox Catholics and Protestants of his time but advocated and nourished in the Hermetic mode of thinking.

While Protestant theology taught that God did not endow people with the capacity to know all his secrets, occult philosophers argued that it was individuals' right and responsibility to translate the hidden laws and connections between nature and mankind

³¹⁵ Bacon had high hopes that James I would institute his plan in the New World in order to affect his universal religious and scientific aims.

in order to affect change in human beings' physical and spiritual condition. While the new scientific method inevitably separated itself from religious ideals, some authors, such as Bacon, argued for the coexistence between scientific and spiritual pursuits. Ultimately, Bacon's *New Atlantis* illustrates his aim for fusing the Hermetic belief regarding humanity's divinity with scientific aims and Protestant values of charity.

Thus, for Bacon, neither secular philosophy nor religion alone could provide individuals with the knowledge that they are divine. Secular philosophy provides the methodology while religion equips individuals with the moral knowledge of the soul. Yet, the religious beliefs of Bacon's day insisted on humanity's sinfulness and lack of agency and thus Bacon turned to an alternative tradition that gave individuals the confidence to seek gnosis/knowledge, derived not through faith but through direct participation with God in nature. Thus, the Hermetic trope of self-mastery, which teaches individuals to embody their true natures as Sons of God, accurately describes Bacon's vision of human perfectability: the integration of spiritual and physical advancement to create a new form of "true religion" with "sound reason"—a syncretism of Hermetism and the New Science.

Bensalem gives us a picture of the New Jerusalem³¹⁶ in Bacon's eyes because it depicts a land where human beings have been able to combine a spiritual life with a material one to create a heaven on earth. Through language and symbols, Bacon illustrates that Bensalemites' spiritual life integrates Christian values of charity and reverence to God with the Hermetic teaching that human beings can regain their divine-like power via their own effort. In Bacon's mind, Bensalem is a better example of the

³¹⁶ The New Jerusalem in Revelation is comparable with the ideal city in Plato's *Republic* and with The New Golden Age in Virgil's 4th Eclogue.

New Jerusalem: these individuals have been able to regain their true identities as mortal gods, as Sons of God because they internalize the Word (they experience “the word made flesh”). In this way, they illustrate for Bacon’s readers how a community can go about performing the Hermetic trope of self-mastery.

The comparison of James I to Hermes³¹⁷ and Solomon³¹⁸ in *Advancement* and *Instauratio* helped Bacon to create a link between ancient Hermetic wisdom and his new plan for an instauration as the founding of the New Jerusalem. Ultimately, we should see Bacon as a reflection of Hermes Trismegistus, for both Hermes and Bacon worked to provide for their “present and future generations guidance more faithful and secure”—guidance that demonstrates human beings’ ability to become mortal gods (*GI*, 14). In telling the narrator to publish the incidents that the travelers had with the Bensalemites, Bacon “inspireth the felicity of continuance and proceeding” of knowledge acquisition (*AL*, 144), which in turn urges his contemporary society to make the “land unknown” a reality so that all nations, not just Bensalem, may be “in God’s bosom” (*NA*, 83).

Bacon died before he could publish *New Atlantis*; yet, as explained by W. Rawley, Bacon’s secretary, Bacon had intended the story to be published with *Sylva Sylvarum* (A Forest of Materials) in order to exhibit a “model” for *what* it would look like to accomplish his plan for new social order. Since fiction is more closely aligned with Bacon’s preferred genre of the essay, readers should understand that his fiction functions similarly to his essays: as an argument that Bacon intends his audience to implement

³¹⁷ In his dedication to the king in *Advancement*, Bacon states, “because there is met in your Majesty a rare conjunction, as well of divine and sacred literature, as of profane and human; so as your Majesty standeth invested of that triplicaty, which in great veneration was ascribed to the ancient Hermes; the power and fortune of a king, the knowledge and illumination of a priest, and the learning and universality of a philosopher” (5).

³¹⁸ A common millenarian motif was the portrayal of James I as the new Solomon who would install the New Jerusalem.

rather than a fantasy. Consequently, readers should interpret “this fable”³¹⁹ in the same way that Bacon did with antiquity’s myths and legends; they should view *New Atlantis* as an “Instance of the Lamp,” which engages readers’ imaginations in order to move their reasons and wills to create advancement.

As Bacon states in his essay “Of Truth,” truth sometimes needs fiction to make it more understandable: “But I cannot tell: this same truth is a naked and open day-light that doth not shew the masks and mummies and triumphs of the world, half so stately and daintily as candle-lights” (245). The truth that Bacon attempts to share in his fiction through “candle-lights”—through metaphor, metonymy, and allusion—is the Hermetic ideal that all beings may be gods in human form if only they work for this form of existence through study and experience.

³¹⁹ In the preface to *New Atlantis*, “To the Reader,” Rawley states: “This fable my Lord devised, to the end that he might exhibit therein a model or description of a college instituted for the interpreting of nature and the producing of great and marvelous works for the benefit of men, under the name of Salomon’s House, or the College of the Six Days’ Works” (36).

**‘By steps we may ascend to God’: the Hermetic Paradigm of a Physical World
Education in *Paradise Lost***

This chapter is fitting to follow Bacon’s not only because in history *Paradise Lost* was written later but because Milton’s text fills in the moral questions that Bacon’s text raises:³²⁰ if individuals have the capability to embody their true identities as mortal gods, how do they morally achieve this? It is my contention that Milton in *Paradise Lost* illustrates that individuals’ true identities are connected to God and as such they are gods in human form. Yet, often humans do not reflect god-like behavior and therefore Milton defines for his audience how “true gods” act by showing how they do not/should not act. While *New Atlantis* provides a working model of *what* it looks like to put the Hermetic mode of thinking into practice, *Paradise Lost* shows *how* to put this philosophy into practice. In other words, Bacon as a philosopher was more adept at presenting abstract, two-dimensional visions for his readers whereas Milton as a poet (first and foremost before he wrote his prose tracts) was able to construct a three-dimensional psychological experience with his words and images. This fluid versus more static literary difference is partly an effect of their respective genres. Fiction in Bacon’s day was not yet its own established genre. Techniques for probing into the center of one’s mind and heart were not yet formulated. Yet, even epic, until Milton, did not provide psychological depth for the early modern age.³²¹ In Christianizing the genre,³²² Milton was able to captivate the hearts and minds of his audience with a question that was burgeoning in many minds of his day: are

³²⁰ I suggest that *Paradise Lost* follows *New Atlantis* in a thematic and rhetorical sense in that Milton attempts to further develop Bacon’s new epistemology for studying nature, the self, and God.

³²¹ Spenser’s *Faerie Queen* does not come close to providing the character depth of Milton’s Adam and Eve. Spenser’s musicality is indeed both emotionally and cognitively moving, yet as plots have several beginnings but no endings and as there is no central crisis or denouement, I would argue that his epic was not as deeply emotional as Milton’s.

³²² With the substitution of Genesis for Geoffrey of Monmouth and Jewish for British history, Milton pushes the poem to the furthest originative limit, and at the same time, drives it back on the most authoritative materials. See Snider 97.

humans hopeless sinners or are they potentially divine?

Harold Bloom views Milton's displacement of epic onto sacred history as making him superior to his rivals. Indeed, the very nature of epic, as Alvin Snider voices, assumes a retrospective posture, moving episodically and in line with a sense of history that emphasizes transcendence;³²³ and thus to use epic as a vehicle to talk about the most transcendent of topics, God's reason for creation and human beings' role in it, Milton is able to provide what many rhetorical treatises and handbooks of his day could not: the *experience* of an education. When I say experience, I mean that, in walking us through pre- and post-lapsarian events, Milton gives us a *re-presentation* of human and divine history. With such techniques as accommodating rhetoric (in which readers hear God and angels speak), Milton is able to show that rhetoric has an internal function, a function that enables one to perform examination and evaluation of the self. In this way, Milton's poem can do what Bacon's fiction cannot: it shows us the interior life of human and divine experience in *stages* of development. As Barbara Lewalski points out, the epic genre is a major rhetorical strategy for educating his audience.³²⁴ In reading about Adam and Eve's experience of losing Paradise, readers begin to imagine their own lives as a story, and as such, learn with both Adam and Eve about their own sin, pride, and rebellion.³²⁵

Yet the story does not end with the loss of Paradise; it walks us through the steps for regaining it. This re-ascension depends upon one's ability to hear and embody the Word of God. As Thomas Merrill states: "whatever we decide to call *Paradise Lost*—an inspired prophecy, a superior form of political science, a sacred document, a virtual myth, a device for reader entrapment—it is at its most fundamental level simply 'words about God'" (9). In borrowing

³²³ See Snider 101.

³²⁴ See Lewalski's *Paradise Lost*, 7.

³²⁵ Stanley Fish argues that Michael and Raphael's strategy is Milton's strategy in the entire poem, whereby his readers become his pupil.

the phrase from Kenneth Burke, Merrill argues that the epic is not about religion for the sake of religion, but the terminology of religion. I agree with Merrill here; but I am not completely convinced by his argument that Milton's poem seems to teach humanity more about its relationship with the 'word of God' than about its relationship with God. For I would argue that it is through God's word that humanity can regain its relationship with the divine. Yet, since humanity's life on earth differs from life in heaven by "degree" and not in "kind," individuals are not yet prepared or equipped to *be* with God, except through having a relationship with his Word (*PL* 5.490). As both God and the Raphael instruct, it is by "gradual scale" that mankind will be able "By steps...[to] ascend to God" (5.483, 5.512).

To get this message across, Milton took on the role of guide, helping to instruct all of humanity how to live "rightly." In *Against Smectymunus*, Milton illustrates that there is no better calling than to be a poet-prophet: "Certainly there is no employment more honourable, more worthy to take up a great spirit, more requiring a generous and free nurture, then to be the messenger, and herald of heavenly truth from God to man, and by the faithful work of holy doctrine, to procreate a number of faithful men, *making a kind of creation like to Gods*, by infusing his spirit and likeness into them, *to their salvation*, as God did into him" (Sect 5:83, my emphasis).³²⁶ As William Pallister reiterates, both the poet and the preacher have a rhetorical calling: the poet to persuade to virtue and the preacher to persuade to a love of holy doctrine, thereby assisting in salvation.³²⁷ In this tract, Milton tells us that his main goal for *Paradise Lost* is to teach individuals how to obtain their own salvation, defined as attaining to their god-like status. In this way, he becomes like Hermes, whom God instructed to become a "guide to

³²⁶ *Animadversions upon the Remonstrants Defence Against Smectymnvs* published in 1641 is the third of John Milton's anti-prelatical tracts (series of five political pamphlets that attack the Episcopal form of church leadership), which responds to Bishop Joseph Hall in a dialogue form with quotation and response.

³²⁷ See Pallister 84.

mankind, teaching them the doctrine, how and in what ways they might be saved” (CH I, 54).³²⁸

Again in *Against Smectymunus* Milton states, “the persuasive power in man to win others to goodness by instruction is greater and more divine then the compulsive power to restrain man from being evill by terrour of the Law” (Sect 5:83). Milton here assigns himself the role of teacher to instruct others about internal truth rather than external law. Two centuries earlier, Erasmus observed a disconnect in man’s³²⁹ education, noticing that teachers train their students “more for gymnasium than for battle...When they come to serious matters they seem inept rather than instructed wherefore scarcely any others are more unprepared for real fighting than those whose whole lives have been spent teaching and learning the art of sword fighting.”³³⁰ “Real fighting,” for Erasmus as for Milton after him, meant fighting not for victory but against sin. In a similar vein, Milton is less concerned with making a better epic poem than he is with making better persons.³³¹

For Milton, the process for making a better person involved understanding that the unconventional meaning of the New Testament presented the steps for humankind to regain paradise. In this vein, the Hermetic compendium, still a great influence on philosophers during this time such as the Cambridge Platonists, becomes a helpful “key” in decoding the meaning of “personal salvation” and “Son of God” title in the New Testament. Some of Milton’s literary inventions stray from events recorded in the Bible: such as having Satan rebel because of

³²⁸ Additionally, God says to Hermes, “why do you not make yourself a guide to those who are worth of the boon, that so mankind may through you be saved by God?” (CH I, 53). In *The Reason of Church-Government*, Milton describes the poet’s public role as “to imbed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue, and publick civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune” (2:816-17). “Allay” here is similar to Aristotelian “purge.”

³²⁹ I use the term “humanity,” “human beings,” “mankind,” or “individuals” when I can. Yet at times, it is appropriate to use “man,” as Milton and other Renaissance writers employed this pronoun, many times to refer just to their fellow men readers, but by extension to refer to all of humankind.

³³⁰ Quoted in Shuger, 49.

³³¹ In *Reason*, Milton explains that his goal is to make better persons when he states that his goal is “not to make verbal curiosities the end...but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens” (2:810-11).

jealousy of the Son of God and having Adam rather than God ask for a companion. Both inventions draw attention to two very important Hermetic teachings: first, that individuals can all work toward becoming Sons or Daughters of God and secondly, that individuals must know themselves “experientially”—they must experience all facets of themselves, both good and bad, in order to attain to this salvation. Thus in outlining a program of spiritual education for human beings to accomplish in the physical world so that they may gradually ascend back to Godhead, Milton attempts to keep the Renaissance Hermetic mentality alive in the Restoration. In the midst of Puritan and mechanistic modes of thinking, Milton attempts to help his readers understand that God is always and consistently within not outside of nature, and since God is within nature, mankind can study nature not only to *know* God but also to *become* like God.³³² Milton’s argument in *Paradise Lost* encompasses the entire Hermetic practice for becoming a self-determining being. With the assistance from God, the angels, and each other, Adam and Eve teach Milton’s readers how they too can perform the Hermetic trope of self-mastery and attain to personal salvation.

Mankind’s Power of Choice and the Notion of *Felix Culpa*

Part of the process for obtaining salvation involves realizing that humans create their own heaven and hell; no one, especially God, decreed this experience for them. In this way, Milton does not simply attempt to justify the ways of God to men, but even more so to justify the ways of men to men. Milton draws attention to individuals’ responsibility for their own “falls” and subsequently for creating their own redemptions. Milton makes it quite clear in Book 3 that God’s foreknowledge did not decree mankind’s fall; rather the fall was man’s choice. For God

³³² Milton’s Hermetic view of life as an education mirrors Pico’s Hermetic argument that man chose to incarnate in the physical world in order to accomplish soul development. Milton was not the only figure in the late Renaissance to the early Restoration who promotes the Renaissance Hermetic mentality. Rudolph Cudworth in his *System of the Universe* (1678) argues for the predominance of the Hermetic dialectic of God within nature against atheistic ideas, which he saw in Cartesian mechanism of his day.

states, human beings are “sufficient to have stood, though free to fall”; “foreknowledge had no influence on their fault” (*PL* 3.99, 3.118). In *Christian Doctrine*, Milton explains: “God’s foreknowledge is simply his wisdom under another name”; “God’s supreme wisdom foreknew the first man’s falling away, but did not decree it” (1:3:154, 1:4:174). Milton distinguishes *certainty* from *necessity* in order to highlight *free will*. In *Christian Doctrine* he states,

though future events will certainly happen, because divine foreknowledge cannot be mistaken, they will not happen by necessity, because foreknowledge, since it exists only in the mind of the foreknower, has no effect on its object. A thing which is going to happen quite freely in the course of events is *not then produced as a result of God’s foreknowledge* but arises from the free action of its own causes, and God knows in what direction the will, of their own accord, tend. In this way, he knew that Adam would, of his own accord, fall. This it was certain that he would fall, but it was not necessary, because he fell of his own accord and that is irreconcilable with necessity. (1:3:165, my emphasis)

In a similar sentiment Milton has God say in *Paradise Lost*:

They therefore as to right belong’d,
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate,
As if Predestination over-rul’d
Thir will, dispos’d by absolute Decree
Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
Thir own revolt, not I; (3.111-17, my emphasis)

God’s words here reflect the Hermetic teaching that “God is blameless; it is we that are to blame for our evils, if we choose the evils in preference to the goods...so by his own doing, [man] makes the fire yet hooter for his [own] torment” (CH IV, 62 & CH I, 52). Milton further invests in God’s language a belief that God does not impose necessity upon mankind’s actions:

no decree of mine
Concurring to necessitate his Fall,
Or touch with lightest moment of impulse
His free Will, to her own inclining left
In even scale. (*PL* 10.43-7)

Milton’s view here on free will and necessity resonates with the Hermetic precept that “we have

power to choose; for it is in our power to choose the better, and likewise to choose the worse” (*Sto* XVIII, 174) and those people who live according to their “intelligent substance,” what Milton would call “the Word within” (God’s light), are “self-determining” beings that “Destiny [Necessity] has no hold on” (*Sto* XVIII, 174).

This view is counter to a line of traditional religious thinkers, such as Pomponazzi and Luther, who argue by way of Aristotelian logic that God’s foreknowledge does impose necessity.³³³ Despite these counter arguments, Milton rejects, along with many Arminian thinkers of his day,³³⁴ Calvin’s³³⁵ notion of the predestinate salvation or damnation of each individual³³⁶ in favor of the belief that salvation is open for all those who work for it. In his view, man is free to choose or to reject salvation. As God says, men are “authors to themselves in all / Both what they judge and what they choose; for so / I formed them free, and free they must remain” (*PL* 3.122-3). Freedom to choose is the first criterion for what it means to be human. In *Areopagitica*, Milton argues that without freedom, human beings would be mere

³³³ For instance, Pomponazzi states, “Seeing that God now knows all future things and has known them for a millennium, and since that a thing is follows logically from the knowledge of the things, since there is no knowledge of what is not... consequently it follows, if God has known all things that will be, those things will be... Therefore, it is necessary that all things that will be, will be because they will be unable not to be. Thus, when human action will occur, and of necessity, free will is snatched away; for necessity and such freedom are mutually exclusive” (Quoted in Pallister, 24). In the famous debate between Erasmus (who argued for free will) and Martin Luther (who argued against free will), we see a microcosm of the social spiritual contradictions continuing well into Milton’s time. Erasmus argues in *Discourse On Free Will* that prescience is not the cause of things that happen while Luther argues in *The Bondage of the Will* that God “foresees and purposes and does everything by his immutable, eternal, and infallible will. He is a thunderbolt by which free choice is completely prostrated and shattered” (Sect 9:28).

³³⁴ Such as Jeremy Taylor, Henry Hammond, John Goodwin, Thomas Helwys, John Smyth, John Griffith, Samuel Loveday, and Thomas Grantham. 1591 Dutch reformed pastor Jacobus Arminius studied with Beza, Calvin’s successor. Yet, Arminius rejected Calvin’s notion of salvation and claimed that salvation was open to anyone who cooperated with God.

³³⁵ Samuel Johnson, two centuries ago, noted that Milton’s theological opinions can be said “to have been first Calvinistical, and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism.” (1:154). Danielson states that it is not surprising that in the early 1640s, Milton would style himself an anti-Arminian in his *Apology Against a Pamphlet* (1642). Yet, the only evident issue Milton had with the Arminian belief is that it denied original sin. William Laud, whom Charles I made bishop of London and archbishop of Canterbury, was an Arminian. This could have been one of the reason Milton at first opposed the Arminian sect.

³³⁶ Calvin in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* states, “the eternal decree of God” by which “some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation” (3:21:5).

puppets, unable to prove their love or intelligence.³³⁷ For without the freedom to choose to love, individuals would present only “blank virtue” (*PL* 2.515).

Along Luther’s line of thinking, Book 3 would appear to compromise God’s transcendent power, thus providing confusion between the notions of God as omniscient and all-powerful. Yet Milton illustrates that man is truly an image of God (“in our image, man / In our similitude” *PL* 7.516-7). Therefore, if choice is what separates Adam from being “artificiall” (“meer artificiall Adam”) then choosing is what also separates God from being a mechanical God. God performs “choice” at every moment, choosing always to illuminate and manifest the good: “my goodness, which is *free / To act or not*” (7.71, my emphasis). In response to Tertullian’s³³⁸ famous question, why wouldn’t God (who is all-powerful and good) intervene to prevent man from falling or create him in such a way that he could not fall in the first place, Milton would respond: “reason is but choosing.”³³⁹ Since God chooses to do good, and since humans are a reflection of God, then choice is intrinsic to individuals’ beings and cannot be taken away: “free they must remain” (3.123). Similarly, the Hermetic texts argue that God should not “save” humans; rather they need to learn how to save themselves because ultimately human beings are divine if only they would act as such: “You must not...say that God ought by all means to have freed the world from evil” for it is through “virtue of these gifts [intellect, knowledge, intuition] alone” that “we [are] enabled to shun the traps and deceptions and corruptions of evil” (*Asc* II, 126). Therefore, humans should truly act divine and dispel “darkness of error...from the soul” so that “man’s consciousness [will be] wholly absorbed in the knowledge of God” (*Asc* III, 147);

³³⁷ In *Areopagitica*, Milton states, “many there be that complain of divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgresse, foolish tongues! When God gave him reason he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had bin else a *meer artificiall Adam*, such an Adam as he is in the motions, we our selves esteem not of that obedience, or love, or gift, which is to force (527, my emphasis). Free will is thus integral to the creation of genuine actions.

³³⁸ Tertullian (160-220 CE), an early Christian apologist, called the Father of Latin Christianity, is most famous for coining the term “Trinity.” See Section II.5-6.

³³⁹ See *Areopagitica*, 527.

for ultimately it is “God’s will that what is human should be divine” (CH X, 77). As God makes the choice to illuminate good, so too should human beings; and Milton, in parallel with the Hermetic teachings, argues that individuals have the ability to “evil turn to good” (PL 12.472).³⁴⁰

Not only humans but also angels have the ability to “fall” through choice. Raphael tells Adam: “freely we serve, / Because we freely love, as in our will / To love or not; in this we stand or fall” (PL 5.528-40). Satan fell because he neglected to see that all beings are a reflection of God. Satan chose to move farther and farther from God and consequently sank farther and farther into the labyrinth of his mind, which was clouded with darkness and falsehood rather than light and truth. Yet, is Satan’s fall negative? For that matter, is Adam’s fall negative? In *Paradise Lost*, Milton gives us a new definition of the “fall,” not previously conceived by orthodox thinking.³⁴¹ This re-definition involves seeing “fall” / “death” and “rise” / “life” as unifying opposites rather than opposed states of being. Thus, Milton helps his readers to embrace the concept of *Felix culpa*.

The notion of *Felix culpa* is not Christian orthodoxy. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton redefines for his readers what it means to “fall”: it is mankind’s agency to be active in choosing good over bad. Donne illustrates in *Satire 3* that “truth and falsehood bee / Neare twins” (lines 72-3). Similarly, in *Areopagitica*, Milton argues, “the knowledge of good is so involv’d and interwoven with the knowledge of evill...It was from out the rinde of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evill as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the World. And perhaps this is that doom³⁴² which Adam fell into of knowing good and evill, that is to say, *of knowing good by*

³⁴⁰ “Good out of evil to create” (PL 7.188).

³⁴¹ Similarly, Pallister argues, “the fall is not necessarily a failure of reason” (208).

³⁴² We should look at Milton’s “doom” with a new understanding. We should define “doom” here in the early modern usage of the term: personal or private judgment and/or enactment (as in putting into action some law, that humans must “work” to gain knowledge of God. Similarly, we should take God’s words that individuals thus enters “a World / Of Woe and sorrow” to be expressive of the “hardship/work” that they will face as a result of choice but not expressive of any “unfortunate” or “hopeless” act (PL 8.333).

evill” (514, my emphasis). In Milton’s perspective, mankind’s fall is the entrance to a form of education about good and evil. Dennis Danielson argues that Milton viewed the Fall as unfortunate because humans could have reached heaven without sin once “improved by tract of time” (*PL* 5.498). It is true that mankind could have withstood temptation from the beginning, as God made humans “sufficient to have stood, but free to fall” (3.99). Yet, Milton illustrates that the fall is fortunate because it enables humans to have a much deeper understanding of themselves and God.

In Milton’s rendition of biblical events, the fall is fortunate because it brings about more creation. For instance, when Adam learns of redemption, he compares it with creation:

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness! (*PL* 12.469-73)

As Michael teaches, it is only through “the fall” that Adam is able to *create* a better “paradise” than the one he had before (12.471-2). Adam realizes this fortunate experience of the fall when he states that he “rejoice[s] / Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring, / To God more glory, more good will to me / From God” (12.474-8). Milton’s view of the fortunate fall reflects the Hermetic tenet that the physical life experience is a journey individuals take to learn and experience how they can embody their true natures as divine.³⁴³

When we redefine the term “fall” to describe positive actions and results, then we can

³⁴³ In *Stobaeus*, Hermes teaches that “man must train his soul in this life” to “draw [himself] near to God” and in doing so he may have “power over [him]self” “and in saving [him]self” (VI, 163 & VIII, 165). Furthermore, this Hermetic philosophy illustrates that in embodying divinity, man further enhances God because he “permeates all things” (CH XII, 95) and “since the world is God’s handiwork, he who maintains and heightens its beauty by his tendance is cooperating with the will of God” to “make things assume shape and aspect which God’s purpose has designed” (*Asc* I, 123).

understand “fall” or “descending” as natural and thus creative, restorative acts.³⁴⁴ Milton gives us a privileged experience of God’s “wisdom infinite” in his process of creation (*PL* 3.706).

First, we see there is confusion, then order:

Confusion heard his voice, and wild uproar
Stood rul’d, stood vast infinitude confin’d;
Till at his second bidding darkness fled,
Light shone, and order from disorder sprung: (3.710-13, original emphasis)

Uriel shows us here that to be “confused” is to be ready for order, not to resist it. Along this line of thinking, Adam and Eve’s first natural state is one of confusion. In this state of confusion, Adam and Eve are pulled to learn “darkness” before they can truly learn “light.” Thus, in a state of “confusion” where only “darkness” resides, one lacks knowingness; yet, in a state of “order” one is able to receive “light,” which propels one to experience a state of knowingness.

Therefore, in order to ascend back to Godhead, things need to proceed in this order: from a state of confusion to a state of knowingness, from darkness to light. Thus, just as darkness underwent transformation, so too will human beings undergo perfection from unknowingness to the experience of one’s god-self. As Michael illustrates, Adam and Eve’s experience, of learning how to emit the light (truth/good) rather than darkness (misjudgment/bad), will help them to “posses / A paradise within thee, happier far” (12.586-87). In this way, Milton illustrates a similar thought process to the Hermetic teaching that “God willed that the universe should not be complete until man had done his part” (*Asc* I, 121). Man’s “part” here is to follow the same

³⁴⁴ Annabel Patterson in “Milton’s Negativity” argues that Milton knows how to make a negative into a positive. For instance, there is negativity in blindness; but Milton argues in *Second Defense* that “his blindness is not a punishment for his defense of the regicide, but rather a sign of exceptional privilege” (91). Patterson’s argument corresponds to Milton’s argument: one must know evil (negative) to know good (positive). In knowing evil, one can learn how to create good out of evil. In this line of thinking, one can turn a negative into a positive. Thus in descending, in falling, in experiencing negativity, and in knowing evil, one is able to learn how to restore goodness and positivism more strongly. As Milton states: “Taught by the heavenly Muse to venture down / The dark descent, and up to reascend” (*PL* 3.19-20), Milton was personally able to learn the value and necessity of turning a negative into a positive through his literal blindness.

order and structure of all creation: through the act of choice and through experience, individuals should in steps or stages learn how to bring order out of confusion, how to “evil turn to good” (*PL* 12.471), and how to transform themselves into the divine beings God has intended them to be.³⁴⁵

A System of Earthly Education: By Steps We May Ascend

This leads us now to the discussion of Milton’s argument for gaining knowledge in degrees or stages. In Book 7, we see that God intended to create men to dwell on earth not in heaven so that they “by degrees of merit” will raise themselves to create a heaven out of earth. He states:

out of one man a race
Of men innumerable, *there* to dwell,
Not *here*, till by *degrees of merit rais’d*
They open to themselves at length the way
Up hither, under long obedience tri’d,
And Earth be chang’d to Heav’n, and Heav’n to Earth, (*PL* 7.155-60, my emphasis)

God’s words here “under long obedience tried” illustrate that individuals will undergo a long period of education from which they will gain knowledge of good by knowing evil; they will learn how to turn confusion into order and knowledge. This system of education reflects the Hermetic teaching that God made humans “that they might mark what things are good, and discern diverse natures of things good and bad” (CH III, 60). In this educational experience, individuals should work in stages toward goodness and thus god-ness. In the Hermetic line of thinking, “a soul may rise to a higher grade of being” (CH X, 83) for it is the “divine part of him...namely mind, intellect, spirit, and reason, [that] he is found capable of rising to heaven” (*Asc* I 123).

³⁴⁵ Human beings are intended to be divine: CH X: “God’s will that hat is human should be divine” (77) and *Asc* I: “he who maintains and heightens [the world’s] beauty...is cooperating with the will of God...[and] make[s] things assume that shape and aspect which God’s purpose has designed” (123).

Raphael explains that mankind may rise to heaven because all things will return to God if they are centered in goodness. He states, “O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom / All things proceed, and up to him return, / If not deprav’d from good” (*PL* 5.469-472). This is similar to the Hermetic belief that “all things are linked together and connected one with another in a chain extending from the lowest to the highest” (*Asc* III, 130). Since there are levels or spheres of existence, each level has its own “job performance”: “Each in thir several active Sphears assign’d, / Till body up to spirit work, in bounds / *Proportion’d to each kind*” (*PL* 5.487-89, my emphasis). Thus, Adam may rise in “degree” to attain to angelic status, only after he masters his assignment within the “sphear” of the earth, which is to learn good by knowing evil and to thence “Good out of evil to create” (7.188). In a similar argument, the Hermetic texts illustrate that “into all things [God] infuses spirit, assigning it to each in larger measure, in proportion as the thing stands higher in the scale of being” (*Asc* III, 127). Since “what is human [is] divine” (*CH* X, 77) and differs only in the degree,³⁴⁶ individuals may work (“under long obedience tried”) toward refinement of body into spirit. In both Milton’s and the Hermetic view, matter is divine.³⁴⁷ The highest degree of matter is “spirit” in Milton’s words or “intelligible substance” in the Hermetic philosophy. Thus, similar to Bacon’s argument that there will be a time when human beings “will not be kept for ever tossing on the waves of experience” (*GI*, 29), Milton shows that “A time may come when men / With Angels may participate” (*PL* 5.493-5). Yet, until this time, mankind must experience the human level of existence.

In Raphael’s conversation with Adam about mankind’s possibility to ascend to God, he

³⁴⁶ In *CH* XII, we see this same discussion of degree of divinity: “the rarest part of matter then is air; the rarest part of air is soul; the rarest part of soul is mind; and the rarest part of mind is God...soul is in body, mind is in soul, and God is in mind” (95).

³⁴⁷ All matter is divine because “God manifests himself through all things” (*CH* V, 64). And the “bodies of all living beings are made of matter. They are diversely made, but all are composite, in greater or less degree; the heavier bodies are more composite, and the lighter less” (*CH* IX, 75). This teaching is similar to Michael’s words that mortal and angelic bodies are only “Differing but in degree, in kind the same” (*PL* 5.490).

uses the terms “intuitive” and “discursive” as substitutes for “right reason” and ratiocination respectively. He states “Discursive, or Intuitive; discourse / Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours, / Differing but in degree, or kind the same” (*PL* 5.508-10). Although human “discursive” reasoning is of the same “kind” as the angelic “intuitive” right reason, mankind’s mortal reason often becomes the Baconian “enchanted glass” as it gets lost in its own logical theories and fallacies. Adam proves he is trapped in the use of mortal ratiocination when he inquires into the creation of the world. In Adam’s process of discursive reasoning, he in effect tells God that God has made an error in creating “so late”: “what cause / Mov’d the Creator in his holy Rest / through all Eternity so late to build / In Chaos” (7.90-3). Adam cannot know the entire truth of the creation story, for as Raphael made clear to him, it is only “by the tract of time” (5.498) that “men / With Angels may participate” (5.493-4). Until this time, individuals need to work with “corporal nutriments” (5.496) to learn about things in “thir several active Sphears assign’d” (5.477) until “by gradual scale” (5.83), their bodies “may at last turn all to spirit” (5.497)—a state of existence in which they will be equipped to understand the truth of the creation story. Even though Adam understands what Raphael has taught him, later in Book 8, he continues to try to probe into the mysteries of God and the universe: “I found not what methought I wanted still; / And to the Heav’nly vision thus presum’d” (8.355-6). When Adam attempts to seek knowledge beyond the capability of his “active Sphear,” Eve works in the garden. Milton illustrates that Eve models correctly Raphael’s advice that it is from being active with the “corporal nutriments” that they move to the next level of comprehension.

In this way, Milton helps readers understand why there are degrees of separation between humans, angels, and God. The very act of Creation is an act of separation. Chaos is defined by its boundlessness, the “immeasurable Abyss” (*PL* 7.211). To create order and goodness, God

divides the abyss. In this way, chaos³⁴⁸ is the lack of creation, and thus to create is to set or measure boundaries. The circle of the world was created thus: “He took the golden Compasses, prepar’d / In God’s Eternal store, to circumscribe / This Universe, and all created things / one foot he centered, and the other turn’d / Round through the vast profundity obscure, / And said, Thus far extend, thus far *thy bounds*, / This be thy just Circumference, O World” (*PL* 7.225-31, my emphasis). Similarly, in the Hermetic teaching, God’s “subtle breath...permeated the things in chaos” with “holy light” and “all things were divided one from another” (CH III, 59) so that the “separation of things which were combined” could “be made anew” (CH XII, 96). In Hebrew, the root word for “holy” means to be “sanctified” and “separate.”³⁴⁹ In *Paradise Lost*, Milton illustrates that limitations both physical and mental, depending upon the level or degree of existence, are positive acts of creation. Paradise with its four walls, Heaven with its fortification, and Hell with its gates illustrate the necessity for boundaries. Metaphorically, individuals need to employ this same act of creation by setting limits upon their moral thinking and behavior. Raphael tells Adam that “knowledge is as food, and needs no less / her Temperance over Appetite” (*PL* 7.126-7). In this view, the more people are conscious of overcoming the negative, the more they manifest only the good.³⁵⁰

Although “Heav’n hides nothing from view” (*PL* 1.27), humans cannot comprehend heaven correctly because they are physically and mentally separated from

³⁴⁸ Satan confesses that his ambition to reign in heaven is an “unbounded hope” (*PL* 4.60). We should read “unbounded” as chaos and darkness. Chaos here is the state of existence that can lead to evil because of the lack of boundaries.

³⁴⁹ The Hebrew word, Qof-Dalet-Shin means holy, sanctified, sacred, and separated as in the meaning of Nazir (the root of Nazirite) which relays “delineation,” “consecration,” and “separation.”

³⁵⁰ This is all the more relevant when we understand that earth has the potential to become a room or “suburb” of hell as John Gillies phrases it. Earth itself is destined to evolve into a paradise only if Adam and Eve and their offspring can continue to “Good out of evil to create” (*PL* 7.188).

the divine sphere.³⁵¹ Yet, there is a proper path to aspire to heaven. In *Of Education*, Milton states, “the end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright” (366-67). Regaining the knowledge, of knowing “God aright” (completely), will not happen on earth,³⁵² but individuals can work to get closer to knowledge of God, more than they already are, by studying themselves and their surroundings. As Raphael states: “to know / That which before us lies in daily life, / Is the prime Wisdom” (*PL* 8.188-90). For in trying to understand life in heaven without truly having an understanding of life on earth, individuals will err in understanding: “so far, that earthly sight, / if it presume, might err in things too high, / And no advantage gain” (8.120-22).³⁵³ In this line of thinking, proper knowledge is what is useful to the individual at his level/degree of existence. The angels know more about God because they are closer in proximity to God and as such have attained to more spiritual bodies that allow them to perceive God more than mankind’s denser and less refined body and mind. For human beings, who are not as refined in body, it is more advantageous to study their immediate surroundings.

Adam understands Raphael’s teaching that it is through the study of nature that individuals may gain understanding of themselves and God: “Well hast thou taught the way that might direct / Our knowledge, and the scale of Nature set / From center to circumference, whereon / In contemplation of created things / By steps we may ascend to God” (*PL* 5.508-12). It is in studying creation on earth that will lead one to knowledge of

³⁵¹ Michael illustrates, the closer one is to God, the more “refined” he is: “But more refin’d, more spirituous and pure, / As nearer to him plac’d or nearer tending” (*PL* 5.475-6).

³⁵² Of course, until mankind works to help the earth evolve into paradise: “And earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth” (*PL* 7.157-60).

³⁵³ This is reminiscent of Bacon’s argument that mankind must in successive stages study particulars before moving to generals.

creation in heaven for, as Raphael says, we should think of the Earth as a “shadow of Heav’n / and things therein / Each to other like more than on Earth is thought” (5.575-6). Raphael’s words are a reflection of the Hermetic precept of “adaption” in the *Tablet*: “That which is beneath is like that which is aboue: & that which / is aboue, is like that which is beneath, to worke / the miracles of one thing.”³⁵⁴ Through the Hermetic knowledge that individuals must study the world around them before, and in order that, they can learn about the world of heaven, we are better able to understand Raphael’s words to Adam that studying his surroundings “Is the prime Wisdom” (PL 8.190); knowledge of nature is prime wisdom because what is above is like that which is below, differing only in degree but not in kind. In this way, Adam learns that human comprehension is only the beginning of a multifaceted curriculum of divine nature.

Paradise Lost illustrates the purpose behind each level/degree of creation: God created earth, mankind, paradise, angels, and heaven in order to experience many facets or aspects of himself. Creation occurred when God decided to stop “retiring” (withholding) himself.³⁵⁵ This reflects the Hermetic tenet that God created “all things [to be] divided one from another” (CH III, 59) so that he could manifest himself and be “embodied in all bodies” (CH XVII, 66).³⁵⁶ The understanding that God made all things to express different facets of himself and therefore that

³⁵⁴ See Appendix I for full *Tablet* translation.

³⁵⁵ God states, “Boundless the Deep, because I am who fill / Infinitude, nor vacuous the space. / Though I uncircumscrib’d myself retire, / And put not forth my goodness, which is free / To act or not” (PL 7.168-71). In “putting forth” himself, God extended his being to become separate entities so that each creature could express/experience one facet of his being. In this paradigm, the analogy of a drop of water in an ocean is useful to explain how God and his creation are One. Although a drop of water is a separate and distinct body with movement of its own, it is at all times still a part of the entire ocean.

³⁵⁶ In the Hermetic philosophy, “God is hidden from sight, and yet is most manifest” for “coming into being is nothing else than presentation through sense” (CH V, 64). In this way, manifestation of himself in physical form is how God can experience himself in action. Without putting himself forth, God would just *be*; in this state of existence, God cannot experience himself *coming into being* until he stops “retiring” himself and puts borders/boundaries on himself by giving shape to many bodies. The Hermetic philosophy illustrates that it is God’s “very being [purpose] to generate movement and life in all things” which is ultimately a process of making himself: “in making all things, God makes himself” (CH XI, 89 & CH XVII, 111).

God is within all things is relevant to Milton's discussion of how mankind can act rightly and know "God aright." For in knowing that God is within, that human beings are truly divine, individuals can learn to reflect "the image of their glorious maker shone" through their "truth," "wisdom," "sanctitude" and pur[ity]" (*PL* 4.292-4). In the Hermetic and Neoplatonic view (see Plotinus), individuals are always fused with God even though they may not always be aware of this. This is what Milton attempts to teach his readers: God is always with man; man just needs to reflect the God within.³⁵⁷

Furthermore, this Hermetic argument helps to clarify exactly what Milton attempts to prove to his readers, that ultimately soul and body are one for they are both facets of God.³⁵⁸ For Milton and the Hermetic thinkers³⁵⁹ who helped to undo the orthodox doctrine of dualism of matter and spirit,³⁶⁰ spirit is rarified matter and matter is dense spirit.³⁶¹ God himself is of the same substance as both angels and humans. In this line of thinking, Satan's rationale that he is "self-begot, self-rai's'd / by [his] own quick-ning power" is ultimately true, though at the same time misguided (*PL* 5.853-61). The Hermetic texts illustrate that matter "though it is manifestly ungenerated...has in itself from the first the power of generating" (*Asc* II, 125). God made all

³⁵⁷ Similarly, as Harold Skulski states, "by being co-present with [God]...[man] gets to share" in God's existence and "be (derivatively) good [him]self" (111-2).

³⁵⁸ This concept is what Samuel Johnson does not understand when he critiques *Paradise Lost* as presenting confusion to readers, arguing that Milton is inconsistent in presenting pure materiality and pure immateriality. He states, "Another inconvenience of Milton's design is that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits. He saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action; he therefore invested them with form and matter...His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit and sometimes animated body" (1:184).

³⁵⁹ Vitalism, which sprouted in opposition to 17th century mechanism, grew out of the Hermetic philosophical-theological teachings. Vitalists illustrated the Hermetic understanding that soul and body are interconnected not separated and that "the movement of the kosmos and of every living being that is material, is caused, not by thing outside the body, but by things within it, which operate outwards from within" (CH II, 56).

³⁶⁰ Stephen Fallon explains: "instead of being trapped in an ontologically alien body, [Milton shows that] the soul is one with the body" (80).

³⁶¹ Remember the Hermetic teaching: "The rarest part of matter then is air; the rarest part of air is soul; the rarest part of soul is mind; and the rarest part of mind is God...soul is in body, mind is in soul, and God is in mind" (CH XII, 95). Additionally, in the *Tablet*, Hermes instructs that the "subtle" bodies are spirit bodies and "solide" bodies are simply a denser form of spirit.

things to come into being with an inherent power, “an original fecundity” in matter “which possess in itself the power of conceiving things and giving birth to them” (125).³⁶² Yet, “as the generative power of matter is productive of good, so it is equally productive of evil also” (*Asc* II, 126). This Hermetic precept helps us understand how Satan has the power, the ability, to perform evil through his own choice.

Turning Away from God: Satan as Model of What it Means to Sin

In this way, Satan, just as much as Adam and Eve, provides a model of redemption for readers: he shows how true Gods *don't* act. Whereas Adam and Eve model for readers how to use the physical world experience to shape their divine existence, Satan models for readers what it looks like to lose one's identity by turning away from God. If Satan would have worked to reflect God's power in a similar fashion to Raphael and Michael, instead of trying to act *outside* of God, Satan could have been able to learn how to enhance his power, to make his/God's power stronger. Yet, because Satan chose to be *above* God (to usurp God's power), rather than be *with* God (as a reflection of God's power), he faces the consequence of being controlled by Fortune (Destiny / Necessity). Being subjected to Necessity because of his drive for power reflects the Hermetic teaching that “the intelligible substance, if it has drawn near to God,” “is not subject to Necessity” because “it has power over itself and in saving itself.” “But if it falls away from God, it chooses the corporeal world, and in that way it becomes subject to Necessity” (*Sto* VIII, 165).³⁶³ Thus, Satan is subject to his fate as a snake³⁶⁴ until the day he chooses to end his cycle

³⁶² Milton illustrates this same generative power in matter when he explains the formation of the earth as the natural process of an embryo maturing (*PL* 7.276-82).

³⁶³ This Hermetic teaching finds a counterpart in the New Testament. For instance, Romans 8:6 states: “For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” Similarly, Galatians 6:8 states: “For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life.”

³⁶⁴ We are reminded of the ouroboros snake, the symbol for the alchemical process of transmutation in which individuals slay themselves and then bring themselves back to life, through a purgation and vivifying process that brings them back to their divine natures. In this state as a snake, we should view

of acting outside of or above God.³⁶⁵ In this paradigm, Satan models for readers what happens to those who ignore their divine essences in preference of corporeal ones.

In turning away from God, Satan has become oblivious to the knowledge that he is a reflection of God.³⁶⁶ His actions exhibit the Hermetic explanation of how one “falls” through the act of completely separating oneself from God: “Look at the soul of a child, a soul that has not yet come to accept its separation from its source...it is not yet fouled by the bodily passions.” “But when the body has increased in bulk, and has drawn the soul down into its material mass, it generates oblivion; and so the soul separates itself from the Beautiful and Good...and through this oblivion the soul becomes evil” (CH X, 81). Angels and humans are already separated from God by the fact that they are created beings “put forth” from God’s self. Therefore, when they mentally separate themselves from God, then they further spatially separate themselves from God; it is this mental and physical distance that causes beings to act ignorantly and perform “evil.” Any action that is performed outside of divine understanding is an evil act because it is an oblivious one; Satan is oblivious that his angel body and his soul are both facets of God’s being. Through Milton’s depictions of Satan’s actions, readers begin to understand that, if they

Satan as an individual in need of slaying himself in order to bring him back into the consciousness that he is a reflection of God, not God’s competitor. Milton seems to show his readers that Satan is ripe for the alchemical process; if only he would work to repair his original divine nature.

³⁶⁵ Can Satan be Saved? At the condemnation of apocatastasis which occurred during the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 CE, Gregory of Nyssa argued that God’s ultimate presence “in all” means the elimination of all evil from the universe—when all things are restored universally to their primal state of innocence including Satan. During Milton’s time, Protestants believed that Satan was removed from the possibility of salvation. For instance, John Hayward states, “Angels that did sinne, shall neuer be blessed” (Quoted in Patrides 472). Richard Montagu in *Acts and Monuments of the Church* 1642 states, that because of “the[ir] aversion from God...it was irrecoverable, and their sin impardonable; God swore unto them in his wrath, they should never more returne unto his rest” (Quoted in Patridge, 472). *Paradise Lost* and *Regained* seem to depict Satan’s redemption as impossible. Disobedient angels are to be confined to Hell: “Without redemption, without end” (*PL* 5.615). Satan appears convinced that “all hope is now lost / Of my reception into grace” (*PR* 3.204). Similarly, Donne feels that Satan: “never return to mercy” (*Sermons* 5:86). Yet, as Satan is matter put forth from God, he is a part of God. Thus, his fallen state does not have to be permanent: “thir lost shape, permitted, they resume” (*PL* 10.574).

³⁶⁶ Satan illustrates this oblivion when he states, “who saw / When this creation was? Remember’st thou / Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being? / We know no time when we were not as now; / Know none before us, self-begot, self-rai’d / by our own quick-ning power” (5.853-61).

deny that they are a reflection of God, they, like Satan, perform evil.

The act of turning away from God is ultimately Milton's definition of evil.³⁶⁷ Raphael tells Adam that the closer a being is to God, the more refined it is: "But more refin'd, more spirituous, and pure, / As nearer to him plac'd" (*PL* 5.75-6).³⁶⁸ What constitutes being "nearer" to God depends upon a being's stage of development. Raphael and Michael are both physically and spiritually closer/nearer to God because they have been able to embody God's Word to a greater degree than Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve are both physically and spiritually at a greater distance away from God because they are still at the early stages of development: in order to attain to Godhead, they need to learn good and evil and then to be able to "evil turn to good" and emit only good, God's light.³⁶⁹

Satan falls because he rejects that he is a reflection of God and thus, he is "as far removed from God and light of heav'n / As from the center thrice to th' utmost pole" (*PL* 1.73-4). In this way, readers learn through the example of Satan that mental separation causes physical separation. Being both mentally and physically separated from God is to become not only ignorant of God, but also ignorant of the self: "not to know mee [God] argues your selves unknown" (4.830). To deny God as his maker, Satan is in many respects unmade: "then who created thee lamenting learn, / When who can uncreate thee thou shalt know" (5.894-95). In denying his origin, Satan determines his end. Abdiel says: "O alienate from God...Forsak'n of all good; I see thy fall / Determin'd" (5.877-79). Satan is the prime example of what happens to

³⁶⁷ Similarly, Augustine in Neoplatonic fashion in *Confessions* says, "And I asked what wickedness was, and I found that it was no substance, but a perversion of the will bent aside from thee, O God, the supreme substance, toward these lower things, casting away its inmost treasure and becoming bloated with external good" (7.16.22).

³⁶⁸ The concept of drawing nearer to God is mirrored in the Hermetic texts: "The intelligible substance, if it has drawn near to God, has power over itself and in saving itself...but if it falls away from God, it chooses the corporeal world, and in that way it comes subject to Necessity" (*Sto* VIII, 165).

³⁶⁹ This is similar to the Hermetic argument that men need to "mark what things are good and discern the diverse natures of things good and bad" in their corporeal existence (*CH* III, 60).

God's creation when it has "gone out from God and become the property of another": there is nothing "to prevent its being infected and polluted, since it is now in a mutable state" (*CD* 1:7:309).³⁷⁰ Satan is not inherently evil; he has just puts himself to evil use. Here Milton illustrates that creation is a choice that is freely made, and thus, Satan's destruction is a choice he freely makes. In this way, he destroys and unmakes himself because he restricts himself from the growth of light to remain instead unchanging in darkness. Satan here models for Adam and Eve, and by transference readers, the importance of maintaining mental closeness with God, especially when spatially separated from him.

Furthermore, Abdiel and the Son attempt to teach readers through their interactions with Satan that all creatures are a reflection of God and thus they should seek to emulate rather than destroy their connection with God. In response to Satan's complaint³⁷¹ for having to honor the Son, Abdiel³⁷² relates: "all honour to him done / Returns our own" (*PL* 5.845-5).³⁷³ Additionally, in response to Satan's criticism that God requires his creation to praise him,³⁷⁴ the Son helps Satan to see that God's "word all things produc'd, / Though chiefly not for glory as prime end, / But to show forth his goodness, and impart / His good communicable to every soul / Freely" (*PR* 3.123-27). In both Abdiel's and the Son's arguments, God is the *result* of creation

³⁷⁰ To "prevent its being infected and polluted," one must listen and embody the word of God within.

³⁷¹ Satan chooses to see God as a Machiavel who imposes restrictions on him: "Not just, not God" (9.701). See Victoria Kahn's "Machiavellian Rhetoric in *Paradise Lost*" for a discussion on Satan's depiction of God as a Machiavel.

³⁷² Abdiel is a good example of a being who is not yet an archangel but who is advanced in his being enough to resist the peer pressure/temptation of his companions/enemies. Abdiel was "alone / Encompass'd round with foes" (5.875-6), "Among innumerable false" (5.898), and subject to "hostile scorn" (5.904).

³⁷³ Abdiel's words emulates the Hermetic wisdom that the macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm world, and that it is in praising the gods, that one can become a god: "the man who...has attached himself to [the gods] by pious devotion, becomes like to the gods" (*Asc* I, 118).

³⁷⁴ Satan states: "he seeks glory, / And for his glory all things made, all things / Orders and governs, nor content in Heaven / By all his Angels glorifi'd, requires / Glory from men, from all men good or bad, / Wise or unwise, no difference, no exemption; / Above all Sacrifice, or hallow'd gift / Glory he requires" (*PR* 3.110-120).

not a *cause* or God's reason for creation.³⁷⁵ Those "who advance [God's] glory, not their own, / Them he himself to glory will advance" (*PR* 3.143-4). Thus in submitting to God, Satan would gain himself; in recognizing himself as a reflection of God, he would seek to enhance creation not destroy it and thus would regain his identity as a Son of God. Milton, as seen through the Son's and Abdiel's wisdom, redefines what it means to "submit": it is a "raising" not a "lowering" of the self to God. Milton, through Satan as example, illustrates how true gods do not act. Just as one must know evil in order to truly know good, one must have an example of wrong action in order to truly know right action. To be devoted to the self, cut off from God, is to be like Satan, and in this way, Satanic knowledge is forbidden knowledge in that it destroys not creates.³⁷⁶

Metonymy as Pedagogical Tool

Milton further enforces the Hermetic belief that all things are interconnected (not ultimately separate as they appear to be) through his use of accommodating speech. Both the angels and God manifest God's Word in material terms. Raphael speaks to Adam in language that he can understand in his corporeal existence. Raphael helps Adam and readers to understand that his words are the same as God's Word, just manifested in different degrees: "for how shall I relate / To human sense th' invisible exploits / Of warring Spirits...what surmounts the reach / Of human sense, I shall delineate so, / By lik'ning spiritual to corporal forms" (*PL* 5.563-74). As

³⁷⁵ Here Satan presents a fallacy: since God created all things and all things glorify God, therefore God created all things in order to be glorified.

³⁷⁶ Through the representation of Satan as a destroyer of God's power ("only in destroying I find ease" *PL* 9.129), is Milton attacking the material mechanists of his day, such as Hobbes and Descartes? Echoing Epicurus and Lucretius' belief that the universe resulted by chance from an infinite chaos of atoms, mechanists,³⁷⁶ who saw nature devoid of God, inverted the structure of sacred history. Biblical history begins with chaos, precedes to order, then again to chaos through the fall of mankind; but it ultimately ends with final restitution of order. In opposition, the theory of atom history ends with chaos in the same way that it started. In the end, chaos reigns. It is Satan's intention to reduce the world to its original darkness; in this way, it seems that Milton is attacking those mechanistic thinkers who see nature without seeing God's reflection. For to ignore God's representation in things is to, in effect like Satan, destroy and deny creation's origin and its true image as the embodiment of God himself.

Adam perceives his world through corporeal means, Raphael must use language that reflects Adam's material understanding. Since humans experience life through corporeal means, they are not able to truly see or hear God as he truly is. Adam expresses his gratitude that Raphael has "voutsaf't / This friendly condescension to relate / things else by me unsearchable" (8.8-10).³⁷⁷ As Pallister relates, during the Renaissance, condescension was taken to be synonymous with anthropopathia—when divine beings descended, or condescend into human company, their rhetoric also descended to human verbiage in order to suit the relatively limited capabilities of the speaker's audience.³⁷⁸ This also reflects the Hermetic concept that "speech is an image of mind; and mind is an image of God" and since speech is an image, it will reflect God in kind but not completely in degree (CH XII, 95).

In this way, metonymy³⁷⁹ becomes the best vehicle for communicating spiritual truth in a corporeal setting. Corporeal terms supplant spiritual ideas; God, like rhetoric, "adjust[s] his word to our understanding" (CD 1:2:136). When God states that Adam and his "whole posterity must die" (PL 3.209-10), he uses the trope of metonymy to communicate the spiritual idea of "change" and "transmutation" with the corporeal term "death." Of course the literal meaning of God's words here communicates that all of humanity will experience death eventually; for humans are subject to the laws of humanity, namely the delimitations of time and space that makes one suffer mutability and mortality. Yet, the more rhetorical and philosophical meaning of "die" illustrates that an individual's life will come to an "end" as he knows it, not that he

³⁷⁷ Later Adam says, "gentle to me and affable hath been thy condescension" (PL 8.648-9).

³⁷⁸ God and the Son's Socratic method, asking a series of questions, is intended to lead readers to knowledge. Extremely rare in God's discourse in heaven, rhetorical questions constitute most of His speech in addressing Adam (PL 8.365-6).

³⁷⁹ In *Arte of English Poesie*, Puttenham expresses hesitation toward the trope of metonymy because he felt that ideas can become confused and misnamed. In using the metonym "Venus" for "love," Puttenham argued that confusion arises with Venus as the author of love. In opposition, Thomas Wilson in *Arte of Rhetorique*, celebrates metonymy as an effective trope of substitution, association, and affinity. Similarly, Peacham in *The Garden of Eloquence* says metonymy, as all figures of speech, is "wisdom speaking eloquently."

would cease to exist entirely. We can understand God's definition of "die" through Raphael's claim that mankind and angel differ only in "degree" and not in "kind." Humans will undergo change in degree: in ascending to Godhead, they will leave behind their mortal bodies in order to ascend to a different degree of existence with a lighter, spiritual body. Yet, in this movement toward Godhead, Adam will not perish, he will undergo transformation.³⁸⁰

If human bodies and spirits are one, as presented in the Hermetic teachings and argued by many vitalists during Milton's day, how is that individuals should ascend to heaven without their physical bodies (since their physical bodies mix with earth to be remade into other forms over time)? When we combine the Hermetic claims, that God made man out of two substances—one divine and the other mortal (*Asc* III, 135)—and that "all living beings are made of matter...diversely made...the heavier bodies are more composite, and the lighter less" (CH IX, 75), with Raphael's claim, that "Mans nourishment, by gradual scale sublim'd / To vital spirits aspire," (*PL* 5.483-4) we will understand more clearly that man's physical body is but a reflection of his spirit body. It is important for Milton to illustrate that matter and spirit are connected, that they are one, so he can demonstrate to his readers how important it is to know and experience that "what is human [is precisely] divine" (CH X, 77). In re-defining what it means to be human as a divine existence rather than one of sinful drudgery, Milton highlights that mankind's "job" in his earthly realm is to reflect and further manifest God's divinity/goodness in material form.

³⁸⁰ The Hermetic texts describe this process in alchemical metaphors, another form of accommodating speech: "God has subjected things to change; for by transmutation the things made are purged of evil"; when things "die" they "undergo dissolution, not to perish, but to be made anew" (CH XVI, 107 & CH XII, 96). The alchemical understanding of transmutation of things rather than cessation of things is also reflected in the *Tablet*: "And as all things haue / proceeded from one, by the meditation of one, so / all things haue sprung from this one thing by / adaptation" (See Appendix I). This idea is also reflected in John 8:51 when Jesus states, "I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." For in truly living by the Word, in reflecting God's goodness, humans will not "die" and start the whole earthly educational process anew; rather they will ascend to another state of existence closer spatially and spiritually to God.

Since God's use of metonymy conveys some intangible state in terms of the tangible, we could easily say that humans' lives are one long "metonymic" action: their lives are a tangible or corporeal reflection or accommodation of their spirit beings. Their physical world existence helps them to understand and experience their spiritual world existence. When they "by small / accomplishing great things" (*PL* 12.566-7), they are able to render grand concepts comprehensible. In this way, metonymy is the rhetorical figure that best expresses the process by which humans can become again like God. In this process of metonymy, physical world existence helps individuals learn to be *with* the divine and to themselves *be* divine; thus on earth, individuals should learn how to be walking images of God. In *Christian Doctrine*, Milton asks, "If God attributes to himself again and again a human shape and form why should we be afraid of assigning to him something he assigns to himself?" (1:2:136). In lieu of this argument, humans become the metonymy of God themselves for they are the embodiment of God's spiritual body in physical form.

Just as Milton argues that mankind should not be afraid to assign God a human form, so too should individuals not be afraid to assign personality to him. Douglas Bush argues that the purpose of *Paradise Lost* would be better served if Milton depicted a less personal God—a more abstract God (perhaps obscured by a pillar of smoke). In opposition, J. B. Broadbent argues that Milton's God lacks personality of his own since his speeches are too abstract with not enough human pathos.³⁸¹ I suggest that Milton presents both an abstract and personal God: he seems *abstract* to us because, in our physical form, we cannot understand him in his entirety and *personal* because, in our expression of pathos, we are ultimately a reflection of the pathos God is capable of

³⁸¹ See Bush, 43 and Broadbent, 146.

expressing.³⁸² Milton understands the Hermetic tenet that “God is not devoid of sense and thought, as in time to come some men [such as the material mechanists of the 17th century] will think he is” (CH IX, 76). For Milton, all opposites are united in God; thus abstract and personal are two aspects of the same thing.

The trope of metonymy helps Milton to unify God’s abstractness and personal-ability. In order to express his personal-ability, Milton promotes the idea that the Son is God “substantially expressed” (*PL* 3.140). In this way, the Son also becomes a metonym for God. In this act of metonymy, the Son exists as an extension of the Father, an extension in the sense that the Son is the Word of God: “All hast thou spok’n as my thoughts are” (3.171).³⁸³ We are to understand the Son, as God’s word, serves as a mediator between heaven and earth, and as a mediator, the Son expresses God to mankind both audibly and visually. With “let us make now Man in our image,” God attains a narrative presence; it is through the presence of his son that the father can speak “audibly.”³⁸⁴ Additionally, it is through the Son, as the Word, that God can be seen in action: “all his Father shone / Substantially expressed, and in his face / divine compassion visibly appeared” (3.138-41).³⁸⁵ Thus, God can become personal to us through the Son. Donne also

³⁸² Broadbent argues that God’s abstractness is conveyed when he transfers agency from himself to the Law: “Die he or justice must” (*PL* 3.210). Yet within this abstract, intellectual principle that either man or justice will die, we can see a representation of God’s personal expression of himself, which always manifests the Good; for as the Hermetic precept states, “God cannot exist without making that which is good” (CH XI, 89). If individuals attempted to “skip” the necessary stage of physical existence (the stage of learning what is right and wrong or good and bad) in his process toward ascending to Godhead (“O Sons, like one of us Man is become / To know both Good and evil, since his taste / of that defended Fruit” *PL* 11.84-6), then justice would cease to be respected and adhered to and then goodness would be destroyed; ultimately then, God would be destroyed if goodness were to be destroyed. In this way, I would argue that God’s words here present a full circle view of his abstractness as well as his personal-ability: for in this view, we get a glimpse in to his unshaken love of goodness. And since God continuously chooses to be good, he, by “metonymic” extension, urges mankind (one facet of himself) to continuously choose good too. This is quite a personal view of God.

³⁸³ Similarly, this idea is a reflection of the Hermetic teaching that the Word and the Son are the same thing: “from the Light there came forth a holy Word...this Word was the voice of the Light...the Word which came forth from the Light is the Son of God” (CH I, 48).

³⁸⁴ This is expressed in CH I: “The Mind the Maker worked together with the Word” to create (49).

³⁸⁵ This is also communicated in God’s words “by thee / This I perform” (7.163-4). Similarly, the Hermetic texts reveal the Son as the visual expression of God: “the Sun, being near to us in position, and like to us in nature” that God “presents himself to our sight” (CH XVI, 109).

highlights the same view of God as both abstract and personal: “My God, my God, Thou art a direct God...a literall God... But thou art also...a figurative, a metaphorical God too: a God in whose words there is such a height of figures, such...precious metaphors” (*Devotions* 72).³⁸⁶ Furthermore, Donne’s words that Christ is a “metaphoricall Christ” more so than a “literall” one reflects Milton’s depiction of the Son as not only a Mirror of God, but also the vehicle from which God can express himself to his creation. In this way, the Son becomes as Donne states, the “way” of God and the “gate” to God (*Devotions*, 73).³⁸⁷

Even though Milton illustrates that the Son is *one* with God, that the Son and God are “united as one individual soul” (*PL* 5.610),³⁸⁸ he argues in *Christian Doctrine* that the Son is a subordinate deity, not an omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, or immutable being and thus, with evidence from Psalm 2:7 “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee,” Milton argues that the Son is not eternal. Is Milton’s argument here a sign that he rejects the Trinity as many Socinians advocated during his day?³⁸⁹ Abraham Stoll argues that Milton self-consciously positions himself between Trinitarian and Socinian positions by insisting on the “begetting” as both literal and metaphoric. The Son *is* God because he is God’s Word; yet at the same time the Son is separate from God because he is the expression of God in God’s many forms. Ultimately, the Son is the vehicle that God can express his thoughts and wisdom and it is through the vehicle

³⁸⁶ Similarly in “To My Father,” Milton seeks to persuade his father: “father and son, we possess the divided god” (line 81).

³⁸⁷ See also *Christian Doctrine*, 1:5:205. Similarly see the New Testament: John 8:12, “I am the light of the word”; John 14:6, “I am the way and the truth and the life”; John 6:35, “I am the bread of life.”

³⁸⁸ This is similar to the language in John 10:30: “I and my Father are one.” The Hermetic texts illustrate this unity as “matter is one, soul is one, and God is one” (*Asc* I, 117).

³⁸⁹ English Socinians of 1650s to the 1690s believed that the Trinity undermined monotheism and thus they removed the Son from Godhead. Marvell recounts in *The Rehearsal Transpos’d* London 1672: “Socian books are tolerated, and sell as openly as the Bible” (Quoted in McLachlan, 140). By the 1690s a wave of Socinian publication, from figures such as Stephen Nye and Thomas Firmin, began to effect the transition to Unitarianism. Michael Servetus in 1553 was burned at the stake for his arguments against the Trinity. There is little evidence in Bible for Trinity: I John 5:7 stood as the main piece of scriptural evidence of the Trinity. Erasmus omitted it from his NT, considering it a Latin interpolation. Erasmus was a significant resource for the Antitrinitarian argument.

of the Son that humans can experience God in active mental form.³⁹⁰

Therefore, Milton does not attempt to remove the Son from Godhead, even though he recognizes that the Son is “the less principle cause” (*CD* 1:7:302) in God and the Son’s acts of creation; rather he attempts to add mankind into this realm of divine action, through his illustration of the Son as the “way,” the example. Milton’s figurative/metonymic representation of the Son as the visual and auditory expression of God serves as a *pedagogical tool* to educate readers what it looks like to visibly and audibly express God. By highlighting the concept of “merit” over “birthright” when God tells the Son: “By merit more than Birthright [he is the] Son of God” (*PL* 3.309), readers can see that mankind too can become the full elaboration and realization of God’s will by embodying God’s Word. Within the Socratic-like dialogue between Father and Son, the Son shows through freedom of choice that he will assume responsibility for Adam and Eve’s error. The Son here expresses himself as a reflection of God’s love. As Margaret Thickstun states, the Son is what love incarnate looks like (104). The Son models for Adam and Eve, and thus all of Milton’s readers, that “Heav’nly love [*can*] outdo Hellish hate” “in thee, / Love hath abounded more than glory abounds” (*PL* 3.311-2). Through this *modeling process*, readers are able to learn that they too can reflect God’s love by taking responsibility for their own actions. In being the embodiment of love, devotion, and justice, the Son expresses God’s goodness. Through the focus on “merit” rather than “birthright,” we can see that mankind too, in reflecting God’s goodness and love, can materialize God’s word in the physical realm (to create further extensions of God’s being).

Becoming a Son or Daughter of God: Listening to the “God Within”

Milton could have gained from Ephesians 4:13 that man can become like Christ: “unity in

³⁹⁰ This Hermetic tenet is also present in Jesus’ teachings in John 14:6-7, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.”

the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”³⁹¹ Yet, the Hermetic teachings, that within all human beings “the Word is Son” and that “man on earth is a mortal god” (CH I, 48 & CH X, 84), get us closer to Milton’s argument that, since man is “the image of [the] glorious maker shone,” he can restore his “whole mind,” “the inner man,” “to the image of God, as if he were a new creature” (CD 1:18:461). This reflects the Hermetic teaching that “Mind the Father of all gave birth to Man, a Being like to Himself...bearing likeness of this Father” (CH I, 49) and when human beings have “followed the Good with Life and Light,” they will “have been made gods...composed of Powers of God” (CH XIII, 101).

In ascending to this status as a Son of God, individuals need to both speak and live with the Word. For Milton, God’s Word is his light and his wisdom. In order to see God’s light in the physical world, individuals need to build a strong relationship with the word of God within. In *Second Defense*, Milton states that being physically blind allows him to see God’s light from the inside rather than from the outside: “in proportion as I am blind, I shall more clearly see” (491).³⁹² In this comparison of opposites, Milton illustrates that interior wisdom, God’s light, is more trustworthy than exterior understanding, which can be compared to darkness or ignorance.³⁹³ Milton’s concept of the *church of one* in *Christian Doctrine*, that all people should find their own truth and develop an “internal scripture,” which is superior to any external scripture that is handed down by others,³⁹⁴ is similar to Plato’s belief that *nous* or “inward man”

³⁹¹ Similarly, I Corinthians 2:16 states: “we have the mind of Christ.”

³⁹² Similarly, Milton refers to Samson as being “eyeless in Gaza” (41) in order to illustrate the need to go within to find God’s will.

³⁹³ Similarly, the Hermetic texts teach that the ray of God’s light within is more trustworthy than the external world: “the soul, when it cleaves to evil [bodily and material] things, draws near to corporeal nature, and for this reason the man who has chosen the worse is under the dominion of Destiny” (*Sto* XVIII, 174). “Destiny” is the controlled fate one experiences when they have cut themselves off from the light of God within.

³⁹⁴ Milton’s argument for individuals to put more trust in their inner voices than the external world is also presented in Michael’s depiction of the corruption of the exterior/visible churches after the Apostles die. He tells Adam that

(*esoanthropos*) was the divine and immortal part of humans: “give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward man be at one.”³⁹⁵ Similarly in the Hermetic teaching, the concept of “inward man” is described as the inward motion of light: “the movement of every living being that is material, is caused, not by things outside the body, but by things within it, which operate outwards from within” (CH II, 56). For Milton, Plato, and the Hermeticists, man’s “internal scripture” is the voice of God (God’s Spirit) within each person. And the “internal scripture” is referred to in the Hermetic texts as “a ray of light from God” (CH XVII, 110) “whereby soul is illuminated” (CH II, 58).

Milton speaks of this “inward man” or more appropriately an inward “invisible church” within man as the living temple where man is most pure and good because it is the “place” where man is most connected with God: “Before all Temples th’ upright heart and pure” (*PL* 1.18).³⁹⁶ I demarcate “place” in quotation marks because the concept of “inwardness” versus “outwardness” in physical world understanding denotes physical spatial markers.³⁹⁷ Yet, the presence of God is everywhere at any given moment. Thus, as depicted in the Hermetic texts,

the leaders will turn “all the sacred mysteries of Heav’n” to their own vile advantage of lucre and ambition”; they will taint the truth with “superstitions and traditions” (*PL* 12.509-12) and seek to “avail themselves of names, / Places and titles” (12.515-16). And the majority of believers “will deem in outward Rites and specious forms / religion satisfi’d” (12.534-35). Through Michael’s depiction of error produced by mankind’s decision to concentrate and derive truth from only the exterior world, Milton argues for a “Church entirely individualized and internalized” (12.167-68). We see this similar argument in Acts 17:24-5: God “dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands.”

³⁹⁵ See Plato’s *Phaedrus* 15:279b.

³⁹⁶ For Milton, “the internal scripture of the Holy Spirit...has [been] engraved upon the hearts of believers, and...is certainly not to be neglected” (*CD* 1:30:587). Similarly, I Corinthians 6:19 states, the “temple of the Holy Ghost,” whereby the living God dwells and walks, is within.

³⁹⁷ As John Gillies illustrates, some 17th century philosophers argued that matter was inconceivable without place for place is the property of the body. Yet, as physical space and location and individuals’ bodies are vehicles or “receptacle[s]” for one’s God self, place becomes secondary, albeit just as important, to a person’s state of being. Satan’s words “My self am Hell” (*PL* 4.75) illustrates this concept of “inwardness” as a metaphorical “place.” Satan performs Hamlet’s pithy understanding that man “could be bounded in a nutshell and count [him]self a king of infinite space” (*Hamlet* 2.2.254-5). Wherever Satan goes, he is in hell because this is his state of mind: “A minds not to be chang’d by Place or Time” (*PL* 1.253). In Book 1, Satan reiterates Hamlet’s understanding that “nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so” (*Hamlet* 2.2.250) when he claims that “The minds is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n” (*PL* 1.254-5). Because of his jealousy, Satan forces himself to feel every situation as a Hell³⁹⁷ and thus chooses at every moment “to reign in Hell” as opposed to “serve in Heav’n” (1.263).

the concept of “God within” is the inner metaphorical “place” where individuals and God connect while their physical bodies are separate: “in you too, the Word is Son, and the mind is father of the Word” (CH I, 48). Even though place is real as it is intrinsic to living bodies which are “placially shaped,” we should say metaphorical “place” because all things are infused with God’s “Life and Light” (CH I, 52) not just a particular place in one’s body.³⁹⁸

Therefore, since God’s “Spirit [is] within them...to guide them in all truth” (PL 12.488, 490), Milton felt comfortable in saying that “every believer is entitled to interpret the scripture...for himself [since] he has the spirit, who guides truth, and he has the mind of Christ” (CD 1:30:583); “every believer is ruled by the Spirit of God” (1:30:590).³⁹⁹ Although he was a devoted reader of the Scriptures, Milton went even further to say, “the Spirit which is given to us is a more certain guide than scripture, and...we ought to follow it” (1:30:589).⁴⁰⁰ Milton’s “God within”⁴⁰¹ is the Word of God that he places “within [human beings]...to guide [them] in all truth, and so arm [them] / with spiritual Armor, able to resist / Satan’s assaults...With inward consolations recompens’t”—from the Spirit (PL 12.487-8, 490-1, 495). “Satan’s assaults” here should be viewed as a metonym for the temptations of the external world that pull individuals

³⁹⁸ In a similar discussion of “place,” Augustine in *De Trinitate* 5.6 argues that the soul was diffused throughout the body.

³⁹⁹ This notion of the spirit of God within is also present in I Corinthians 3:16, “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that god’s spirit lives in you?” and Galatians 5:25, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

⁴⁰⁰ In *Of True Religion, Haeresie, Schism, and Toleration*, Milton states, “True Religion is the True Worship and Service of God, learnt and believed from the Word of God only” (419). Whereas passages of the Bible may confuse readers, the Word within men will always guide them to truth.

⁴⁰¹ Milton expresses that “God within” can be understood as The Holy Spirit, God’s Word, and his Light. Sometimes Milton uses the “divine breath which creates and nourished everything” to refer to the Spirit or Word of God (CD 1:6:282). Similarly in the Hermetic teaching, God’s spirit is also referred to as a “breath”: the “subtle breath, intelligent...permeated the things in Chaos with divine power” (CH III, 59). Sometimes Milton uses spirit to mean “the light of truth, whether ordinary or extraordinary, with which God gives light to his people and leads them” (CD 1:6:283), such as “the light with which God illuminates Christ himself” (1:6:283). In Book 3, Milton illustrates that the “God within” may be expressed as his light that “shine[s] inward, and the mind through all her powers / irradiate” (PL 3.52-3).⁴⁰¹ Or sometime Milton refers to spirit as a “divine impulse” (CD 1:6:284): “Spirit can mean a divine impulse, light, voice or word sent from above, either through Christ, who is the word of God, or through some other channel” (CD 1:6:284).

into darkness/chaos.⁴⁰² Yet, guided by “inward consolations,” “divine impulse,”⁴⁰³ or God’s “light of truth,” individuals are able to live as God lives, in pure goodness.

The Son’s begetting as God’s Word leads to Satan’s rebellion which in turn leads to all of the major plot events in the poem—the war in heaven, the apostates’ fall, Adam & Eve’s fall, and the expulsion. The link with Satan’s rebellion to the Son’s begetting is original to Milton. In rewriting biblical history, Milton draws attention to Satan’s jealous thirst for absolute power and by extension, highlights mankind’s errors in mimicking Satan’s destructive path. In this framework, Milton draws attention to the *Son of God* title and Satan’s desire to *be* a Son of God. Ultimately, Satan’s words in *Paradise Regained*: “All men are Sons of God” are true; but Satan does not understand what it means to be “Son of God.” Satan rationalizes that since the Son is called Son of God, he too must have been a Son of God and since he was, he must still be (even though he recognizes that he is out of God’s favor); therefore, since the Son and he are Sons of God, it follows that man too is called Son of God: “In what degree or meaning thou art called /

⁴⁰² Two Hermetic passages illustrate the connection between Satan’s or Demon’s assaults and the external world: “When they sink into the condition of man, they forget their own nature, and bethink them only the disposition of those who have shut them up in the body” (*Sto* XXIV, 193) and “We have power to choose; for it is in our power to choose the better, and likewise to choose the worse; for the soul, when it cleaves to evil bodily and material] things, draws near to corporeal nature, and for this reason the man who has chosen the worse is under the dominion of Destiny” (*Sto* XVIII, 174).

⁴⁰³ While the Son feels “some strong motion” (*PR* 1.290), Samson feels “rousing motions” (*SA* 1382), “intimate impulses” (223) and “divine instincts” (526). During Milton’s time, “motion” could mean “an inward prompting or impulse such as a desire or emotion. It could also mean “a working of God in the soul.” See OED: 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* Collect 1st Sunday in Lent: “That...wee maye euer obeye thy Godlye mocions” and 1670 I. Walton *Lives* I. 37: “God...mark’d him with...a blessing of obedience to the motions of his blessed Spirit.” Similarly, Bacon equates the “appetite or instinct of primal matter” as “the force implanted by God” in *De Sapientia Veterum*. What Milton presents in *Samson* is an alternative to external law: the internal prompting from God. We should be more inclined to see Samson’s “motions” as internal communications with God rather than as some affection of the humours; for Manoa concludes that Samson’s died “With God not parted from him” (*SA* 1719). While Milton does not add angels to show Samson’s inward connection with God, a contemporary of Milton’s, Joost van den Vondel in his *Samson; or, Holy Revenge* makes God’s will and Samson’s role in Providence directly evident by adding an angel named Fadael. When Samson decides to go to the temple, he reports that Fadael had previously come in answer to his prayers and reinstated his strength. Then after Samson’s death, Fadael enters the play, appearing before Samson’s mourners to announce that Samson was a hero in God’s cause that he will be sainted, and that he is a type of Jesus Christ. See Joost van den Vondel’s version of *Samson* translated in Kirkconnel, 120 and 141.

the Son of God, which bears no single sense; / the Son of God I also am, or was / And if I was I am; relation stands; / All men are Sons of God” (*PR* 4.514-20). Satan’s rationalizations are half-correct; for ultimately, all of God’s creatures, because they are of God’s essence (God is embodied in all things), are Sons and Daughters of God. Yet, Satan misses one important factor: to attain to the fullness of what it means to be Son of God, one must “prove” through thoughts, words, and actions that he has embodied God’s Word, reaching, like the Son, the point where he becomes God “substantially expressed” (*PL* 3.140); for it is by “merit” not “birthright” (all creatures have the birthright because they are manifestations of God) that one can attain to the fullness of Godhead.⁴⁰⁴

Milton’s frequent use of “gods” in *Paradise Lost* leads Stoll to argue that Milton’s language implies a “struggle between polytheism and monotheism” (1). Indeed, the term “gods” in the poem challenges the concept of monotheism.⁴⁰⁵ Yet, in Hebrew, the name for God, Elohim, literally means “gods”; the plural form of the name means one God. In Genesis 1:26, God’s words, “let *us* make man in *our* image” tell us that he is not alone. In *Paradise Lost*, God tells the rest of the angels to adore the Son; but Milton departs from his source text here, Hebrew 1:6, to change “angels” to “gods”:

God shall be All in All. But all ye Gods,
Adore him, who to compass all this dies,
Adore the Son, and honour him as mee (*PL* 3.341-43)

⁴⁰⁴ “By merit more than Birthright [he is the] Son of God” (*PL* 3.309).

⁴⁰⁵ In 1660 Platonist Henry More coined the term monotheism out of existing Greek roots. Ralph Cudworth in *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London 1678) states: “the Pagan Theists were both Polytheists and Monotheists in different senses, they acknowledged both many Gods and One God” (233). He further argues that an inscription at the temple at Sais indicates that the Egyptians worshipped “some One thing which was All” (341). This is the same passage that More cites as evidence of the pure materiality of Egyptian worship and hence polytheism when he coined the word monotheism. Later, however, according to Stoll, More credits Cudworth with changing his mind on occult monotheism beliefs. More says the anthropomorphic representations of God in the Bible are to be read not literally but as a conceit—privileged way of conceiving God (192). This way of understanding God through simile, metaphor, and metonymy is similar to Donne’s “Metaphoricall God” and Milton’s theory of accommodation or condescension.

God's command to the "Gods" to honor the Son "as me" illustrates that ultimately Son and God, God and angel, angel and gods, and gods and humans are all the same; they just differ in degree depending how far away they have turned from God. Embracing both polytheistic and monotheistic thinking is not paradoxical for Milton. As Adam states, "And through all numbers absolute, though one" (8.419-21), there are many gods in the One God. Similarly, the Hermetic texts state, "God is like the unit of number. For the unit, being the source of all numbers, is the root of them all, contains every number within itself" (CH IV, 63).⁴⁰⁶ God is comprised of many different aspects of himself; in protean terms, God has many faces, but he is still One. This is expressed in Hermetic terms as "each of the intelligibles [the soul/the mind] is one, and sameness is their essence; but each of the bodies contained in the universe is many" (CH XII, 95).

Given this context, Milton's inclusion of classical gods in his poetry has more to do with illustrating the many in the One concept rather than a desire to adhere to classical rules. The inclusion of the classical gods does not stimulate polytheistic worship; for clearly Milton says when he invokes Urania: "the meaning, not the name I call" (*PL* 1.75). I disagree with Stanley Fish when he claims that the many gods harass the reader. For it is within this very concept of the many within the One that we can understand Milton's argument for *creatio ex Deo*: "one first matter all, / indued with various forms, various degrees / Of substance" (5.472-4). In this framework, mankind is created out of one man just like many angels, humans, heaven, and earth were created out of one God. This many within the One concept further helps us to understand that humans too are gods and thus may be called Sons of God once they "by degrees of merit raised / They open to themselves at length the way / Up hither, under long obedience tried, / And earth be changed to heaven, and heaven to earth" (7.157-60).

⁴⁰⁶ The concept of many in the one is also expressed in Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is...one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Satan illustrates that he does not understand what it means to be a “god” and thus technically his rationalization that he too is a Son of God in *Paradise Regained* is precipitous. For the Hermetic texts illustrate that only those who have become good or virtuous attain to the status of gods: “the man who, in virtue of the mind...through which he is akin to the gods, [and who] has attached himself to them by pious devotion, becomes like to the gods; he who has attached himself to daemons becomes like to the daemons” (*Asc* I, 118). Since Satan’s only goal is to have power over others, he has not become like a god. Satan rationalizes that as a god, “this empyreal substance cannot fail” (*PL* 1.117) in winning ruler-ship over mankind: “And why not gods of men, since good, the more / Communicated, more abundant grows, / the author not impaired, but honoured more?” (5.67-73).⁴⁰⁷ Ultimately, Satan’s words are wise: when one enhances or emanates goodness out from themselves, both man and God (as the ultimate author) are enhanced and honored. Yet, Satan is blinded by his own desire to be *above*⁴⁰⁸ God not a *part* of God; he has not been able to learn that he could attain to Son of God “by degrees of merit raised” (7.157).⁴⁰⁹

Additionally, Satan’s words to Eve profess truth while at the same time they reveal that he is deluded: “and ye shall be as gods, / Knowing both good and evil as they know. / That ye should be as gods, since I as man, / Internal man, is but proportion meet, / I of brute human, ye of human gods. / So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off / Human, to put on gods” (*PL* 9.708-14). His words reflect truth because the “internal man,” which is the divine part of man, is god-like. When humans truly know good and evil, they “may ascend to God” (5.512). Creatures do rise

⁴⁰⁷ When Satan tells Eve in her dream that she will actually honor God by eating the fruit because she will enhance God’s goodness, he shows us his own hidden desire to be honored.

⁴⁰⁸ Satan says: “and with ambitious aim / Against the Throne and Monarchy of God” (1.41-2).

⁴⁰⁹ Here we are reminded of the Hermetic argument: “if you do not make yourself equal to God you cannot apprehend God; for like is known by like” (CH XII, 90). Because Satan was not content in being a part of God (allowing himself to experience himself in equal measure with God), and instead tried to be above God (more powerful than God), Satan is unable to become a Son of God.

“by gradual scale” if they choose to embody divinity: brutes to humans, humans to gods, gods back into God (5.483).⁴¹⁰ Yet, Satan and Eve misunderstand one important aspect: that the steps one takes to “ascend to God” (5.512) are steps performed through “degrees of merit” (7.158), through having experiences where one chooses to rely on the “Umpire Conscience” within (3.195) rather than depending upon an external object to provide a “quick-fix” or in Eve’s words, a “Cure of all” (9.776). I suggest that Milton’s definition of “forbidd’n knowledge by forbidd’n means” (12.279) is precisely one’s seeking for a quick-fix rather than an experience “Improv’d by tract of time” (5.512). In response to Satan’s question, “what forbids us good, forbids us to be wise?” (9.759), Milton would say nothing, when this knowledge is gained in the proper way. In the only specific reference in *Paradise Lost* to the word “science,” Satan claims that the “Wisdom-giving Plant, / “Mother of Science” (9.679) gives one the capacity “to discern / Things in thir causes” and also to “trace the ways” of superior and mysterious beings (9.681-2). I disagree with Snider in saying that “the will to knowledge, specifically knowledge of causes, propels the events that lead to the Fall” (30). For it is not the will to know the causes (the aim of science), but the desire to gain all knowledge of God without going through the stages one must progress through to gain this knowledge. Eve, caught up in Satan’s promise of advancement, is blinded to the fact that she is already divine; she is already a god in “kind.” All she needs to do is work on “tending” to her “active Sphear assign’d” (*PL* 5.476-7) and when she shows that she is “not deprav’d from good,” (5.471) she will “body up to spirit work” (5.478) and become like the gods in *both* “degree” and “kind” (5.490).

Furthermore, I do not agree with Stoll in saying that “resistance to Satan becomes a

⁴¹⁰ I should clarify here that creatures do rise only if they have, through “degrees of merit,” embodied their god-selves. Satan gives readers an example, in Milton’s eyes, of one who descends farther and farther from his godly self because he turned away from God. Satan’s descending stages of existences extend to Lucifer, Satan, beasts, until finally a snake.

matter of resisting the word ‘gods’” (2). The problem does not reside in Eve’s desire to be a goddess but rather in her choice to look outside of herself to give her what she can attain to within. I contend that the Tree of Knowledge functions as a symbol of mankind’s passivity and inaction rather than its dedication to action. The type of action versus passivity that I refer to here differs from the type of “passive fortitude” that the Son exhibits: his humility and his passive heroism in being “unshaken” compared to Satan’s active seeking to destroy. Eve must take “action” or initiative to listen to her inner God voice rather than allowing herself to become a “passive receptacle” for Satan to sway her mind.⁴¹¹ In wanting to eat of the fruit from this tree, Eve reveals her desire to receive a quick remedy⁴¹² rather than going through the longer experience to obtain god-like knowledge.⁴¹³ Eve’s precipitous actions reflect the Hermetic understanding that acting on impulse blinds one to see the truth: “Many men, yielding to reckless impulse, and seeing nothing of the truth, are misled by illusions and these illusions breed evil in their hearts, and transform man, the best of living beings, into a wild and savage beast” (*Asc I*, 120). Although Eve is not a “savage beast,” her desires, to attain to god status without working to achieve this status on her own, reveal that she has been led by illusions that breed passivity rather than activity. Eve realizes later that experience was the better choice than seeking after a quick remedy: “Experience, next to thee I woe, / Best guide; not following thee, I had remain’d / In ignorance” (*PL* 9.807). It is through the lived temptation experience that Eve is able to learn the nature of existence: it is “by small / Accomplishing great things” (12.566-7).

⁴¹¹ See Patterson, 100.

⁴¹² A sign of passivity rather than action.

⁴¹³ In thinking that she needed something outside of her, Eve illustrates that she thinks she cannot obtain god-like attributes on her own. This reflects the Hermetic argument: “If you shut up your soul in your body, and abase yourself, and say ‘I know nothing, I can do nothing...I cannot mount to heaven; I know not what I was nor what I shall be,’ then what have you to do with God? Your thought can grasp nothing of beautiful and good, if you cleave to the body and are evil” (*CH XII*, 91). In denying that she can “mount to heaven” through her own merit, Eve in effect shuts herself in corporeal thoughts and is blind to true knowledge of God.

Losing Communication with God: Learning from the Re-presentation of Adam and Eve's Fall

Caught up in Satan's deception and the enticing promise to "move one step higher" (*PL* 4.50), Eve starts to alienate herself from God. Through her language of contempt, referring to God as "our great Forbidder" and the angels as his "spies" (9.815), Eve illustrates that she is falling into the same trap as Satan. In feeling shame, she wishes to avoid consequences and thus she entertains the idea of concealing the fact that she has eaten the forbidden fruit. Eve's error here is that the idols of her mind (the Baconian "enchanted glass") present to her a false reality that external objects can give her real advancement. Similarly, in looking outside of himself, Adam mirrors Eve and Satan's action of turning away from God. Yet, unlike Satan, Adam does not deny his origin. The first glimmer of self-knowledge comes to Adam by way of interior talk:

One came, methought, of shape Divine,
And said, thy Mansion wants thee, *Adam*, rise,
First Man, of Men unnumerable ordain'd
First Father, call'd by thee I come thy Guide
To the Garden of bliss, thy seat prepar'd. (8.295-99, original emphasis)

Yet, in turning away from God,⁴¹⁴ Adam stops listening to his inner god-self.

Additionally, both Adam and Eve further turn away from God when they attempt to exploit one another in order to enhance themselves. Instead of admitting responsibility for his own decision to follow Eve's direction and eat the fruit, Adam blames Eve for his actions. In seeking to put blame on another, he claims indirectly that it is ultimately God's fault that he sinned because it was God who made Eve for him as a "Divine" gift:

This Woman whom thou mad'st to be my help,
And gav'st, me as thy perfect gift, so good,
So fit, so acceptable, so *Divine*,
That from her hand I could suspect no ill,
...
Shee gave me of the Tree, and I did eate. (*PL* 10.137-43, my emphasis)

⁴¹⁴ Seeking something external to himself illustrates Adam's turn away from God.

Here Adam acts similarly to Satan in that he tries to make God “the author of sinne” (*Discipline* 2:3:293). Yet, the Son tries to get Adam to see that in following Eve’s direction, he has stopped listening to the inner words of God: “was shee thy God, that her thou didst obey / before his *voice*, or was shee made thy guide” (*PL* 10.145-6, my emphasis). Unlike the angels who are able and willing to admit to one another that they have been wrong,⁴¹⁵ Adam is still unable to admit responsibility for his own actions and castigates Eve and all womankind for tempting him/man. He goes so far as to blame God for his decision to create a weaker being:

O why did God,
Creator wise, that peopl’d highest Heav’n
With Spirits Masculine, create at last
This novelty on Earth, this fair defect
Of Nature, and not fill the World at once
With Men as Angels without Feminine,
Or find some other way to generate
Mankind? this mischief had not then befall’n,
And more that shall befall, innumerable
Disturbances on Earth through Femal snares, (10.888-97)

Here we are reminded of the Hermetic declaration that individuals should not blame God for allowing evil to exist because it is through their own decisions that evil continues to exist: “You must not then speak as many do, who say that God ought by all means to have freed the world from evil” for it is through “virtue” of intellect, knowledge, and intuition that mankind is “enabled to shun the traps and deceptions and corruptions of evil” (*Asc* II, 126).

Clouded by anger and the threat of weakness that he has detected in himself but is unwilling to admit, Adam forgets that Eve represents the feminine half of his being. God tells Adam that Eve is Adam’s “likeness,” that she is “thy other self” (*PL* 8.450). Adam understands God’s teaching that Eve is a reflection of him (his other half) when he states, “we are one”

⁴¹⁵ Uriel is able to admit to Gabriel that he has been duped by Satan and Gabriel does not criticize his naiveté but promises immediate action to search the Garden.

(9.958). In other words, he knows that “to lose thee were to lose myself” (9.959); for Adam and Eve are truly “one Flesh, one Heart, one Soul” (8.499). Milton’s conception, that Adam and Eve are one, reflects the Hermetic understanding that all living creatures were once one, containing both halves within one self: “the bond by which all things were held together was loosed, by God’s design; all living creatures, having till then been bisexual...so there came to be males on the one part, and likewise females on the other part” (CH I, 51).

Furthermore, Eve’s understanding that she and heaven are reflected images is appropriate to her role as Adam’s reflected image. The image she sees in the lake reflection is an image “Of sympathy and love” (*PL* 8. 464-5). And God tells her: “follow me / And I will bring thee where no shadow stays / Thy coming, and thy soft imbraces, hee / Whose image thou art” (8.469-72). In learning that she is a reflection of all things because she is a reflection of God, Eve imparts her newfound wisdom to Adam: “Part of my Soul I seek thee, and thee claim / My other half” (8.487). Adam and Eve are both God’s image, though they are not yet identical to him. As separate from God, they are an aspect of him, not God in his entirety. Similarly, Eve is an aspect of Adam and vice versa; they complete each other. Just as good and evil must be understood in relation to one another, Eve and Adam too are part of an intended pair. Both Adam and Eve are essentially inadequate without each other.⁴¹⁶ The feminine and masculine expressions are divided in two beings, but ultimately they express the one God as both rational/valorous and soft/full of grace. A mirror serves as a conventionalized metaphor for the conscience and the interiority of the spiritual life. In complementing each other, Adam and Eve can help each other progress.

Eve’s self-discovery is similar to the myth of Narcissus, who falls deeply in love with his

⁴¹⁶ Similarly, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is symbolic of the two aspects of “self.” Both Adam and Eve are caught in the discovery of their darker side of their self and in tasting of the fruit, are temporarily blinded to the knowledge that they are an aspect of God.

reflection in a pool. Unlike Eve, however, Narcissus never learns that it is his reflection. The scenes of Eve's self-discovery suggest both the ancient Delphic maxim "Know Thyself" and the Christian idea of following God and leaving the self behind (rather than the Narcissus myth of dying because of self-love). As Richard Arnold states, Eve should be seen here as God's ideal creature because she learns her identity, admires her being, but then leaves her mortal self behind in order to follow her God-expression (at this stage in her experience).

Yet, Eve and Adam forget that they are a reflection of each other. Eve first attempts to assert herself on equal ground with Adam, which quickly turns to a desire to be superior to him:

add what wants
In Female Sex, the more to draw his Love,
And render me more equal, and perhaps,
A thing not undesirable, sometime
Superior: for inferior who is free? (*PL* 9.821-25)

Then Eve shifts her focus from power to possession, which she camouflages as love for him:

but what if God have seen,
And Death ensue? then I shall be no more,
And *Adam* wedded to another *Eve*,
Shall live with her enjoying, I extinct;
A death to think. Confirm'd then I resolve,
Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe:
So dear I love him, that with him all deaths
I could endure, without him live no life. (9.826-33, original emphasis)

Similarly, Adam camouflages his desire (fondly overcome with Female charm" as the narrator relates 9.999)⁴¹⁷ for Eve as love when he claims "to lose thee were to lose myself" (9.959). Like Eve, Adam cannot envision life without her. Although they both are truly designed to complement each other, being two aspects of one self and thus should not live without one another, they both show that they are only able to think about themselves (cut off from the other) and what they individually want instead of doing what is best for "the whole." Milton illustrates

⁴¹⁷ In Book 8, Raphael warns Adam about carnal passion, telling him to search for pure love that rejuvenates and expands the mind and body. His love for her must transcend sexual attractiveness.

that this is ultimately a consequence of losing one's connection with the god-self within.

Joseph Wittreich argues, "woman falls first but man falls further" (250). Yet, ultimately, since they both fall, one deceived and the other "forgetting to hold his place" (*PL* 11.634), they both fall in equal measure because they look outside instead of searching within for the answers. Adam did not name Eve until after the fall; the creation of a separate name is representative of Adam's action to think in terms of separation instead of unification. Although separation is not destructive, just as "falling" is positively redefined as the experience and learning of good by knowing evil, what separation will mean for Adam and Eve on earth instead of in paradise is that they will be more metaphorically and spatially separated from God. Therefore, the ultimate lesson that Milton provides here is for mankind to never stop listening to the "Umpire Conscience" within, which guides individuals to know how to live like the gods. For according to Milton, the reason why human beings fall is because they lose communication with God. As Albert Fields articulates, Adam's discovery that he is inferior to himself (through not maintaining his "superior gift" of "wisdom" 10.147,148 in his interactions with Eve) serves ultimately to teach him that he may be better than he is (god-like through interaction with God).

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton illustrates that humanity is like the fallen angels, "In wand'ring mazes lost" (*PL* 2.561) because they have stopped listening to the "God within." Eve is pulled into the maze of ratiocination when Satan works his rhetorical spell on her in the garden. Satan claims that, because he ate the forbidden fruit, he is in possession of "Reason in my inward Powers" "to Speculations high or deep / I turn'd my thoughts, and with capacious mind / Consider'd all things visible in Heav'n / Or Earth, or Middle" (9.602-5). Satan cleverly attempts to get Eve to dissent by characterizing her as "Queen of this Universe," moving her out of her "active Sphear" through the enticement of advancement in title. Through the powers of

discursive ratiocination, he tries to convince her that what is “open” to a being lower on the chain of being should also be “open” to her: “Shall that be shut to Man which to the Beast / Is open?” (9.691-2). Satan’s words that eating the fruit, “So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off / Human, to put on Gods” (9.713-4), illustrates Raphael’s words that human and divine only differ in degree but not in kind. For ultimately, when individuals have learned what they can from their own “active Sphear,” then their bodies will “die” because they will be “turn[ed] all to spirit.” Satan illustrates the philosophical view of death, which promotes that “to die” does not mean cessation of life, but the end of life as they know it—the beginning of a higher and more spirit form of life. Yet, as Eve is caught in Satan’s maze of reason, she does not see the meaning of these words; Satan lures Eve’s pride and passion by, as Arnold argues, tempting her into the labyrinth of mortal reason: “What can your knowledge hurt him...and can envy dwell / In heav’nly breasts? (9.727-8). Thus we see the importance of Michael’s words, that one should “always with right Reason [dwell]” so that “upstart Passions [do not] catch the Government / From Reason” (12.84, 88-9) and reduce him to servitude—“to serve ungovern’d appetite” (11.517).

Temptation as a System of Education

Thus, in order to help people use “right reason” by listening to their “Umpire Conscience,”⁴¹⁸ Milton illustrates that temptation is integral to the educational experience God designed for mankind on earth.⁴¹⁹ Right after Satan’s fall, God foresaw that humans

⁴¹⁸ Milton uses “conscience” interchangeably with “right reason” in *Christian Doctrine*: “the existence of God is further proved by that feeling, whether we term it *conscience*, or *right reason*, which even in the worst of characters is not altogether extinguished”; “no one, however can have right thoughts of God, with nature or reason alone as his guide, independent of the word, or message of God” (1:2:132, my emphasis).

⁴¹⁹ In Books 11 and 12, Michael teaches Adam about biblical history and the present human condition. By viewing himself in the world’s stage, Adam becomes aware of his ability to discriminate between his God self and his baser corporeal self. For instance, the story of Cain and Abel is a microcosm of the two aspects of the self. This reflects Milton’s argument in *The History of Britain* that history can “raise a knowledge of

would benefit from a physical existence built precisely for education of the self. He states: “out of one man a race / of men innumerable, there to dwell [earth], / Not here [paradise]” (*PL* 7.155-6). Through undergoing a system of education in a series of tests on earth (“under long obedience tried” 7.159), individuals will be able to *create for themselves* their own salvation (“till by degrees of merit raised / They *open to themselves* at length the way / Up hither” 7.157-9, my emphasis). Milton here gives us a clear understanding of his definition for salvation: individual’s regaining of their god-like status through their own labor, working their way “Up hither” to the spiritual realm. The Renaissance Hermetic ideal, of creating a heaven out of earth, is precisely what Milton tries to keep alive in the Restoration. For as God proclaims, “earth [will] be changed to heaven” when man has labored to create his own salvation. Adam emulates this when he states, “With labour I must earn / My bread; what harm? Idleness had been worse” (10.1054-5). Similarly, the Hermetic texts illustrate that labor helps individuals to re-achieve their god-like status: “by a well-ordered life of labour in the world...for since the world is God’s handiwork, he who maintains and heightens its beauty by his tendance,” by making “things assume that shape and aspect which God’s purpose has designed,” “is cooperating with the will of God” (*Asc* I, 123). This is echoed in Adam’s words, “To magnify his works, the more we know” (*PL* 7.97). And part of the process to “magnify” God’s works is to “add / Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith / Add Virtue, Patience, Temperance, add Love...then wilt thou not be loath / to leave this Paradise, but shalt possess / A Paradise within thee, happier far” (12.581-7).⁴²⁰

our selves both great and weighty...for if it be a high point of wisdom in every private man, much more is it in a Nation, to know it self” (3:242).

⁴²⁰ And in the Hermetic viewpoint: “[do] all manner of good to all men by word and deed, in imitation of [his] father” (CH X, 83).

Thus physical and mental labor are both necessary to achieve salvation. For instance, Thomas Goodwin in *Of the Creatures* states, “As [man] was to till the Garden of Eden, so was he to till and manure his own Mind” (46). Thus, in order to know God and to know the self as a reflection of God, Adam and Eve need to labor not only corporeally but also cognitively to align their thoughts and actions to God’s likeness: “Man hath his daily work of body and mind” (*PL* 4.618).⁴²¹ Adam and Eve, as representative of all humankind, will have to “prove” themselves in a world of “woe” (they will experience “woe” because the experience of “evil” is painful) in order to be fully aware of their own natures as divine. In this way, paradise is not a place but rather a state of mind that understands and interiorly experiences connection with God, thus Michael’s statement “A Paradise within thee, happier far” (12.587).

Labor and temptation are integral to the system of education that involves a remaking of the self, which is similar to the Hermetic concept of rebirth. The Hermetic texts argue that “no one can be saved until he has been born again,” and in being reborn, man becomes “a god, and Son of God” (*CH* XIII, 98).⁴²² The way to gain one’s true identity as a pure reflection of God is to lose one’s selfish and corporeal desires. The Hermetic texts further illustrate the process for rebirth: “But if you would be born again, you must cleanse yourself from the irrational torments of matter”: “grief,” “covetousness,” “deceitfulness,” “envy,” “rashness,” etc. (*CH* XIII, 100). It is the darker side of the self that heightens awareness of one’s likeness to God, and thus in

⁴²¹ The commandment to tend to the Garden enables Adam and Eve to enact self-knowledge daily: “Man hath his daily work of body and mind / Appointed, which declares his Dignity, / And the regard of Heav’n on all his ways” (*PL* 4.618-20).

⁴²² This is similar to Jesus’ words in John 3:3, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” This is reflected in Matthew 16:25, “Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it.”

experiencing the darker and the lighter sides of the self, man can begin to purge the darkness and be reborn in God's likeness.⁴²³

God reiterates this rebirth concept when he states, "Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will" (*PL* 3.173), through labor and the trial of temptation, remake themselves to reflect "the image of their glorious maker" (4.292). This is the grace that God "Freely vouchsaf't" (3.175), that those who "will hear" the "Umpire Conscience" "within them as a guide," "Light after light well us'd they shall attain, / And to the end persisting, safe arrive" (3.195, 194, 196). Additionally, God illustrates this Hermetic rebirth concept when he states, "from a second root [man] shall be restor'd" (3.288). It is man not God who will accomplish this restoration: "So Man, as is most just, / Shall satisfy for Man...And dying rise, and rising with his raise / His Brethren...Giving to death, and dying to redeem" (3.294-299). With the concept of a "second root," readers focus less on Christ's death but rather on being made anew. "Man...Shall satisfy for Man" (himself) his own redemption through his laboring to become reborn in the image of his maker. In Hermetic understanding, when man embodies the Word, which is called the Son, he is reborn (through the Son) to become Son of God.⁴²⁴

The Son provides an example of one who is able to continue to express his divine self through long trials in *Paradise Regained*. While the Son in human form was able to remain firm that he was divine, Adam was not. The Son models for individuals how they can still express their own divinity during times of trial or "bliss":

⁴²³ The maxim "Know Thyself" for Hermetic followers and other Gnostic sects, who elaborated on Platonic thought, involved the purgation of false opinions in the process of self-examination. Yet, for later Sophists, to know oneself simply meant to know one's wants. We see Milton siding with the Gnostics; for Milton, it was important to know one self as a reflection of God.

⁴²⁴ See CH I, "the Word which came forth from the Light is the Son of God...in you too, the Word is Son" (48). This notion that human beings may experience a spiritual rebirth through God's Word is also expressed in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

True image of the Father whether thron'd
In the bosom of bliss, and light of light
Conceiving, or remote from heaven enshrin'd
In fleshly Tabernacle, and human form,
Wand'ring the Wilderness, whatever place,
Habit, or state, or motion, still expressing
The Son of God, (*PR* 4.596-602)

Milton, through the example of the Son, illustrates that paradise (salvation) is regained not by the sacrifice or mercy from God, but by personally resisting temptation. In *Christian Doctrine*, Milton argues that the Son as our “mediator,” the teacher who shows us the way back to ourselves as divine, is an example of the Greek God-man who gains this status through continual knowledge and consciousness of the self. He states, “How much better for us, then, to know that the Son of God, our Mediator, was made flesh and that he is called and is in fact both God and man. The Greeks express this concept very neatly by the single word *theanthropos* [God-man] (1:14:424, original emphasis). During Milton’s time, “mediator” could mean an intermediate agent, which effects a transition between one stage or state to another. Here Milton illustrates that as mankind’s “mediator,” the Son models how one can behave as a god—how one could put into practice actions that will help him advance from his physical state of existence to a spirit state of existence. Therefore, the words “still expressing / The Son of God” do not only pertain to Christ alone, but are open to all those who labor to manifest the divinity within through both times of trial and bliss.

In *Paradise Regained*, the Son never doubts that God is with him. While experiencing great hunger, he maintains firm in his belief that God will provide “some other way” to nourish him (*PR* 2.254). In this way, he “feeds” himself with the light/word of God within, with thoughts that enable him to do his father’s will, to express God in all his thoughts and actions:

Where will this end?
...

But now I feel I hunger, which declares,
Nature hath need of what she asks; yet God
Can satisfy that need some other way,
Though hunger still remain: so it remain
Without this body's wasting, I content me,
And from the sting of Famine fear no harm,
Nor mind it, *fed with better thoughts* that feed
Mee hung'ring more to do my Father's will. (2.244, 252-59, my emphasis)

The Son's words that he hungers more to do "my father's will" illustrate that he wishes to remain centered in his true identity as a reflection of God. Similarly, in *Christian Doctrine*, Milton conveys that one must encounter both external and internal afflictions in order to become "righteous" or god-like: "for righteousness towards oneself includes both the control of one's own inner affections, and also the pursuit of external good and resistance to...external evil" (2:8:720).

The Son retains his divine self not only in moments of great hunger and isolation in the desert but also in being faced with another being's crafty temptations. Satan tries to tempt the Son through "That sleek't his tongue, [which had] won so much with Eve" (*PR* 4.4) and with the promise of material "honour" and "wealth" (4.367) to "render thee a King complete / Within thyself, much more with Empire join'd" (4.284-5). Yet Satan's temptations are to no avail; the Son proves he is God's reflection in human form:

And opportunity I here have had
To try thee, sift thee, and confess have found thee
Proof against all temptation as a rock
Of Adamant, and as a Center, firm (4.531-4)

By allowing himself to be guided by his inner God light, the Son illustrates that he is more than a man, he is divine: "Worth naming Son of God by voice from Heav'n" (4.540). Yet, the Son's conscious self-knowledge that he is divine does not come until he has been subjected to external temptation. In *Reason*, Milton articulates, "discipline is not only the removall of disorder,

but...the very visible shape and image of vertue” (1:1:751). This reflects God’s words in *Paradise Lost* that he made all of his creations “free” to prove or not prove their sincere love: “not free, what proof could [men and angels] have given sincere / of true allegiance, constant faith or love?” (*PL* 3.103-4).

The Son teaches how one reflects God at all times: withstand temptation and listen to the “Umpire Conscience” within. In this way, the Son shows that “A fairer Paradise is founded now / For Adam and his chosen Sons” (*PL* 4.613-14). We should understand “founded” here in the early modern conception of “foundation”: as the Son’s creation of a foundation or base from which to show individuals how to create their own salvation. In a similar meaning to Samson’s words “thy hopes are not ill-founded” (1504), we should understand the Son’s word “founded” to mean that he has provided the “support” for man to continue his journey back to Godhead.

Modeling How to Achieve Rebirth: Eve as a Reflection of the Son

Eve, in a similar fashion to the Son, proves at the end that her love and “true allegiance” is sincere (*PL* 3.105). By asking for forgiveness and by taking *more* responsibility in the fall than she deserves, Eve emulates the Son’s act of divine compassion⁴²⁵ in accepting the responsibility for mankind’s errors: “all his works on mee / Good or not good ingraft, my Merit those / Shall perfet, and for these my Death shall pay” (11.34-36). By placing “me” before the verb, Eve illustrates that with greater emphasis, she accepts personal responsibility: “the serpent me beguil’d and I did eate” (10.162). In opposition, by placing “me” after the verb, Adam illustrates his emphasis on

⁴²⁵ This is similar to Philippians 2:2-6, “make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

blaming Eve: “She gave me of the Tree, and I did eate” (10.143). In this way, Eve models the correct behavior to Adam and all humankind that individuals should accept responsibility for their own mistakes and be willing to take on more than their share of the burden. Eve emulates the Son’s act of redemption when she states:

both have sin’d, but thou
Against God onely, I against God and thee,
And to the place of judgment will return,
There with my cries importune Heaven, that all
The sentence from thy head remov’d my light
On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,
Mee mee onely just object of his ire. (10.930-36)

Eve does not acquiesce with her head down in shame; she initiates pure love by taking sole responsibility. In this act, she emulates the Son, God’s word, and shows herself to be “Equal to God” (3.306). Eve has gone through the experience of temptation, the experience of remorse, and the experience of accepting responsibility. It is through her use of right reason that Eve is able to feel genuine remorse. It is only in the lived temptation scenes not the dreamed versions that Eve is able to learn how to embody God’s word.

In the end, Eve proves Adam’s statement true: “O fairest of Creation, last and best / of all God’s Works, creature in whom excell’d / Whatever can to sight or thought be form’d, / Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet!” (*PL* 9.896-9). Eve as the last of creation, the Omega, highlights the pathway back to God for the rest of mankind. In aligning the Son and Eve together in their acts of grace and love, Milton blurs the lines between masculine and feminine expression. In being created before Eve, Adam held the position as superior role of Manhood “Wherein God set [man] above [woman who was] made of [him]” (10.149). During Milton’s time, Puritan teachings *stressed* the already prevalent Renaissance family structure: the Father of the household should be the teacher of both his wife and his children. The Son also reiterates

this sentiment when he sentences Eve “to thy Husband’s will / Thine shall submit, hee over thee shall rule” (10.195-6). Yet, Milton, through Eve’s action of redemption, seems to provide another possible paradigm: that both males and females may exhibit feminine and masculine qualities interchangeably. In Milton’s new definition of the fall as fortunate, he seems to open up a metaphorical space where women gain as much agency as men in being able to initiate change. In this way, women, like Eve, can function as teachers and guides to illustrate that, although grace and humility are typically thought of as feminine qualities and thus expressed by females, men should exhibit these qualities because God shows that these feminine expressions of love and grace are one of the most powerful expressions of himself—reflected in his Word through the Son.

As Adam was able to participate in the maternal act of creation by giving birth to Eve, at the end, Eve is able to participate in creation by transferring the burden of punishment of mankind to herself: from her “Loins to bring / Into this cursed World a woeful Race” (*PL* 10.983-4). She will be the “Mother of the human Race” (4.475). Eve’s new role as “mother” also illustrates her role as nurturer and guide as she will bring new order into the existence of life on earth. Eve’s role here is similar to Christ’s role for his disciples: “follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Eve’s “Promis’d Seed,” which “shall all restore” (*PL* 12.623), becomes not only emblematic of her role in the world but also metonymic of her experience in Paradise. She herself becomes the “seed” which shows/sows like Christ how to “restore” salvation: through the experience of love, responsibility, and one’s inner God-self (the “Umpire Conscience” within). Before Adam and Eve walk hand in hand to experience the “active Sphear” of earth’s education, Eve informs Adam (and thus Milton’s readers) that one can listen to the “Umpire Conscience” in their dreams: “For God is also in sleep, and Dreams advise”

(12.611); and for some, this dream experience can provide divine education just as important as lived experience. Similarly, God tells Hermes in the *Corpus* that “God speaks to man by dreams...by inspiration” (CH XII, 97). In the end, Eve leaves us with the message *to listen*. Although they take “their solitary way” (PL 12.649), they are not alone.

Conclusion: Epic as Vehicle for Instruction

Milton’s call to God’s Spirit, “What in me is dark / Illumine, what is low raise and support” (PL 1.22-3), is by transference what Milton’s readers ask for: answers (light) to their questions (dark) about God’s reason for creation and man’s role in it. And answers/light is precisely what Milton intends to provide. He calls *Paradise Lost* his “great Argument” regarding “Eternal Providence” (1.24, 25). Even though he claims that this Argument is intended to “justify the ways of God to men” (1.26), the epic seems to function more so as an argument about justifying men’s ways to men.⁴²⁶ During the Restoration, “justify” could mean “to do justice to or treat justly.” In this way, I argue that Milton is trying to do justice to God by having man look within himself to understand that he, not God, caused his own fall.⁴²⁷ In showing individuals how they could create their own salvation, Milton deemphasizes the Son’ of God’s traditional role as man’s savior.⁴²⁸ The Son’s role in *Paradise Lost* and *Regained* is as a model for how mankind can embody God’s Word and regain the status as Son of God. In this vein,

⁴²⁶ In *Samson*, Milton states, “Just are the ways of God, And justifiable to men” (293). In saying “justifiable to men,” Milton shifts focus from God onto mankind. Instead of blaming God, individuals need to assume responsibility for their current condition—God is free from blame in mankind’s fall. This argument is reflected in *Discipline* where Milton states “That Man is the occasion of his owne miseries, in most of those evils which hee imputes to Gods inflicting” (1:Preface:234).

⁴²⁷ See OED: “Justify”: To show (a person or action) to be just or in the right; to prove or maintain the righteousness or innocence of; to vindicate (*from* a charge). In this way, Milton proves God’s innocence by highlighting mankind’s sin, while at the same time attempting to prove that individuals’ actions in creating their own falls proves to be productive and fortunate.

⁴²⁸ In Protestant theology, “justify” was used to declare one free from the penalty of sin on the grounds of Christ’s righteousness. In this way, Protestant theology stressed mankind’s granted status as “saved” only because of Christ.

Milton highlights both grace and labor in one's ability to gain salvation. Grace here is grace not only from God but also from man to himself. In highlighting the need for the Son to incarnate in human form, Milton emphasizes individuals' responsibility in giving grace to their fellow men. For it is most just that "Man...for Man" (3.294-5) should satisfy his own redemption. In this new paradigm, Milton highlights not just the Son's death but also his rebirth, "And dying rise" (3.296). Here readers are prompted by Milton to use the Son's experience as an example that they should emulate: in remaking themselves, in metaphorically dying, individuals too can redeem themselves. In "dying," people purge themselves from darkness, chaos, and evil; in being "reborn,"⁴²⁹ they embody God's pure light and goodness.

As Milton argues in *Of Education*, "the end of learning" is "to know God aright," and "out of that knowledge" of knowing him, human beings can and should "imitate him, to be like him" so they may embody "highest perfection" (367). Yet as knowing God aright is "the end of learning," individuals need to start with themselves. It is through learning in stages about themselves that people can climb higher on their journey back to knowledge of God. And in showing his readers the details of why and how Adam and Eve fell, Milton mirrors their triumphs and errors to his readers so that they may by example work to know themselves and God "aright."⁴³⁰

"The story of Adam is the story of Everyman in self-realization" (395), as Field succinctly states. In this way, through Adam and Eve's prayers for forgiveness, Milton's readers receive a model for how through love, humility, and rationality (true reason), one may receive redemption. If readers apply Milton's "steps" that he provides through the

⁴²⁹ "Giving to death, and dying to redeem" (*PL* 3.299) explains this rebirth concept.

⁴³⁰ "had'st thou known thy self aright" (*PL* 10.156).

archangels', Abdiel's, Adam and Eve's, and God's instruction, then they too can know themselves and thereby attain to their own salvations. The ancient metaphor that the soul is a garden to be cultivated and educated is applicable to Milton's goal in depicting the fall as fortunate.⁴³¹ For Adam and Eve did both right and wrong in falling. On the one hand, Adam and Eve failed because they fell. They fell because they turned away from God and stopped listening to the "Umpire Conscience" within. Yet, in falling, Adam and Eve gain a greater understanding of themselves and of God. They illustrate that it is through experience that human beings may learn who they are and how they fit into God's creation. In this vein, the fall is fortunate. For through experience, both Adam and Eve are enabled to perfect themselves even more thoroughly.⁴³² For as Adam states, "all this good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good; more wonderful / Than that which by creation first brought forth" (*PL* 12.470-3); through falling, humankind can work not only to correct its actions, but also, by working to "evil turn to good," it can add more light to creation to expand God's love and presence. And in this way, Milton uses the vehicle of his epic to justify, to vindicate, man's ways to each other. Ultimately, man's actions in the fall are just because they have provided the foundation for the *experience of a divine education*: "venture down / The dark descent, and up to reascend" (3.19-20).

In mankind's educational experience, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the opposing forces of Satan and God, symbolically serve to show readers that good and evil, creation and destruction, are two aspects of the self that one must reconcile. In

⁴³¹ Song of Songs 4:12: "You are my private garden, my treasure, my bride, a secluded spring, a hidden fountain." Irenaeus conceived of human beings as being created in a state of infancy and placed in the world to grow and mature. Louis Martz encourages us to read the poem as "the progress of an interior journey, toward the center of the soul" (110).

⁴³² Cambridge Platonist Henry More argues in *Grand Mystery of Godliness* that "Divine knowledge" is "Effectual for the perfecting of the Souls of men, and restoring them to the happiness which they anciently had fallen from" (2). Milton's self-appointed role in writing *Paradise Lost* is to impart divine knowledge in order to help humankind perfect their souls.

this way, all characters in *Paradise Lost* function as metonyms for the abstract ideas of evilness and goodness: Satan is a metonym for evil, God a metonym for good, and Adam and Eve a metonym for those in an early stage of development. Before Adam and Eve, and thus all humankind, can become metonyms of God himself, they must know evil in order to know good. And once knowing evil, they must transform it into good. By turning satanic pride into Christ-like love, individuals learn that they are reflections of God, metonyms of God—God’s spiritual body embodied in physical form. In this way, Milton aligns self-knowledge and self-control in his argument for achieving “paradise within” and salvation (one’s status as Son or Daughter of God).

The war in heaven is the beginning not the end of the battle of Chaos and darkness; it is fought at creation, at the fall, with Cain and Abel, at Babel and the flood, and so on until the apocalypse. Consequently, the action of “evil turn[ed] to good” must be performed continuously. To control evil, one must turn temptation, chaos, and darkness into vehicles for expressing obedience, order, and light. It is only through the experience of temptation that one can truly know that choosing good is a reflection of divine creation. Thus, Milton shows *how* to put the Hermetic trope of self-mastery into practice: when individuals nourish the knowledge that they are divine, that they are God, they seek not to outdo God but rather to reflect him. For in knowing the Hermetic precept that God made all things to express different facets of himself, in knowing that God is within, individuals can learn to reflect the image of God rather than shut themselves off from attaining divinity because of a belief that they are born sinful and doomed until God, through Christ’s return, saves them. In mirroring God’s goodness and light, especially in times of trial and temptation, individuals illustrate that they are God in

physical form; and with “Godlike fruition” (*PL* 3.307) and “By Merit more than Birthright” (3.309), they may illustrate, like the Son (incarnated as Christ on earth) illustrated before, that they are a “Son of God” (3.309) who are “Equal to God” (3.306).

In this way, the philosophical-theological Hermetic mode of thinking helps readers gain a greater understanding of Milton’s view of mankind as divine, unencumbered by the stigma of Christian dogma. For at the heart of both Milton’s epic and the Hermetic texts is the unorthodox belief that human beings are gods in human form. And it is Milton’s goal in *Paradise Lost*, to show readers the steps by which they may regain this divine form: to become self-determining beings like God who choose at all times to perform good and to emit light not darkness. Ultimately, *Paradise Lost* illustrates the power of poetry to effect cultural change. As Lewalski states, Milton claims for poetry “a power akin to and perhaps surpassing that of the pulpit”;⁴³³ for it is through the vehicle of his epic, that Milton attempts to help his society learn how to create “Good out of evil” (*PL* 7.188).

⁴³³ See Lewalski’s “Milton’s Idea of Authorship.”

Conclusion: From Impure Man to Mortal God—Regaining God Consciousness

Literary authors in the 17th century turned to the Hermetic philosophical-theological mode of thinking in an effort to enhance mankind's spiritual agency. Compared to orthodox Christian thinking, the Hermetic philosophy presents a unique view of mankind's role in God's creation as it promotes the belief that individuals have divine inner powers to manifest in the physical world a heavenly existence. Thus the Hermetic discourse urges individuals to undergo training of the soul to become born again as mortal gods, self-determining beings. What I have argued is that Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton used the pedagogical medium of literature to teach their audiences/readers about this Hermetic mode of thinking. Literature (more so than historical or philosophical writings), through its use of characterization, dialogue, and narration, brings audiences/readers a step closer to being able to experience this philosophy in action. Through their literary works, these major authors illustrate that the three main genres of the time, viz., drama, prose, and poetry, effectively capture and communicate to a vast audience how mankind can apply the Hermetic trope of self-mastery on a microcosmic and a macrocosmic level, from individuals to all of humanity.

Shakespeare's play serves to help individuals learn about the importance of knowing one's self in order to fully know God and to know how to use one's physical existence to embody divine nature. The play helps viewers learn that the events of one's life and the people one comes in contact with help teach him how to train his soul to reflect his divine nature. In this effort, Shakespeare highlights the Hermetic goal of becoming reborn into divine consciousness through the assistance of a guide or teacher.

While *King Lear* utilizes the Hermetic view of alchemy to show audience members the Hermetic self-mastery process, Bacon's *New Atlantis* highlights the Hermetic precept that the study of nature helps individuals experience the theoretical knowledge that nature and mankind are divine manifestations of God himself. Because he believes that mankind is a reflection of divinity, Bacon urges his readers to apply the Hermetic understanding that human beings can work to regain their original status as gods in *this* physical existence. While Shakespeare leads audience members through the stages for gaining divine consciousness, Bacon depicts an earthly picture of mankind's salvation in heaven. He constructs in readers' minds a mental image of what it could look like for an entire community to embody divine nature in physical form: the result is the creation of heaven on earth. In this way, Bacon's text works to inspire not just individuals, but communities working as a whole to embrace the Hermetic belief in mankind's divinity and agency in becoming mortal gods.

Whereas Shakespeare depicts what it looks like for an *individual* to attain to self-mastery, and whereas Bacon highlights what it looks like for a *community* to attain to self-mastery, Milton shows *all humanity*, via the actions of its first parents, how human beings can attain to a divine existence.⁴³⁴ Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton illustrate characters in various stages of *being* and *becoming* divine, self-determining beings during

⁴³⁴ I use the terms "individual," "community," and "all humanity" not to refer to these authors' *immediate* audiences but rather to their *projected* audiences. While Bacon and Milton's immediate audiences were individual readers, Shakespeare's immediate audience was a collective group of people watching the performance simultaneously in the theatre. Yet, Shakespeare carries audience members through one man's transformation (supported by the subplot of Gloucester) in an effort to get individual audience members to apply the Hermetic principles and purify their own individual "Sulfurous Mind." In comparison, Bacon and Milton carry their individual readers through a journey that involves not just themselves in the process, but an entire community, and in Milton's case, all of humanity. Thus, I urge my readers to view these texts in a Horizontal Intertextual framework in that these texts build on other texts in which they are related: we move from the Hermetic ideals applied at the individual level to the communal level and finally to the level of all human existence. And thus we receive from Milton a more comprehensive view of how the Hermetic principles relate to not just one particular individual or to particular or to one nation, but to all mankind.

the course of their lives. Yet, Milton pronounces more strongly the Hermetic tenet that mankind descends to an earthly existence precisely for the purpose of a divine education.⁴³⁵

In a time without miracles and revelation, prominent 17th century authors, such as Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton,⁴³⁶ helped their viewers and readers understand that mankind has the ability to restore the godly in a world of decay. Whereas the orthodox Christian mindset advocated a life of faith, the Hermetic mindset advocated a life of experience (or the 17th century meaning of the word as experiment) where people learn to perform and embody God's nature in their thoughts and actions. These authors advocated the Hermetic knowledge that human beings are not, out of necessity, sinful beings; rather they are mortal gods, capable of expressing God consciousness. At the forefront of their texts is the belief that experience and the application of gained knowledge is what enables one to attain to salvation/soul advancement. In this way, Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton urged humanity to experiment with the Hermetic philosophy in an attempt to transform their surroundings and their souls so that they would no longer reside in ignorance and ignominy, but they would "come into a land of angels," where humans are divine (NA, 46).

⁴³⁵ Readers glean from Milton's text that when one does not seek to embody God's divinity in his earthly existence, he, in effect, sins because he acts and lives outside of, or in opposition to, his divine nature.

⁴³⁶ I chose these three authors because, as widely known figures in the time period, their arguments carried great intellectual weight, and in this way, they were able to influence many others around them. Yet, ultimately what I hope my dissertation sparks in readers' minds is the understanding that other figures, both prominent and less so during this time, were also captivated by Hermetism. For instance, in the genre of poetry, Metaphysical poets such as Crashaw, Herbert, and Donne expressed the universal difficulty of living both a spiritual and worldly life, but ultimately stressed mankind's ability to overcome sin and obtain salvation. Specifically, Henry Vaughan in "Childhood" highlights the Hermetic precept that mankind is not born into sin; rather individuals become sinful as they lose themselves in the material world, and in this framework, mankind's agency in regaining his divinity is not lost. Furthermore, I think of this dissertation as the beginnings of a larger body of work designed for the nonspecialist reader engaged in the study of philosophical, theological, and literary paradigms regarding humankind's divinity.

APPENDIX I

The Emerald Tablet

Similarities between the Hermetic *Tabula Smaragdina* and the *Gnostic Gospel According to Thomas* found at Nag Hammadi 1945:

Tabula smaragdina (*The Emerald Tablet*) by Hermes Trismegistus

It is true without leasing, certain and most true.
That which is beneath is like that which is aboue: & that which is aboue, is like that which is beneath, to worke the miracles of one thing, And as all things haue proceeded from one, by the meditation of one, so all things haue sprung from this one thing by adaptation. His father is the sun, his mother is the Moone, the wind bore it in his belly. The earth is his nurse. The father of all the teleme of this world is here. His force and power is perfect, if it [soul needs matter for perfection] be turned into earth. Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the thinne from the thicke, and that gently with great discretion. It ascendethe from the Earth into heauen: and againe it descendeth into the earth, and receiue the power of the superiours and inferiorus: [spirit & matter] so shalt thou haue the glorie of the whole worlde. All obscuritie therefore shall flie away from thee. This is the mightie power of all power, for it shall overcome euery subtle thing, and pearce through euery solide thing. So was the worlde created. Here shall be maruailous adaptations, whereof this is the meane. Therefore am I called Hermes Trismegistus, or the thrice great Interpreter: hauing three parts of the philosophy of the whole world. That which I haue spoken of *the operation of the Sunne*, is finished. (my emphasis)

Gospel According to Thomas

In saying 22, Jesus gives an example of how to enter the kingdom: “When you *make the two one*, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the *above like the below*, and when you make the male and the female on and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female...then you will *enter the kingdom*” (my emphasis).⁴³⁷

Syncretism Taking Place in these Gnostic Discourses

Entering “the kingdom of God” in Jesus’ terminology can be seen as synonymous with the alchemical “operation of the Sunne,” which is the process by which one learns “the Word” of God and has been brought “into the troop of the gods and the souls that have attained to bliss”⁴³⁸ or the experience of being “wholly absorbed in the knowledge of God”⁴³⁹ in the Hermetic terminology.

⁴³⁷ See Pearson, Birger. *Ancient Gnosticism*, 265.

⁴³⁸ CH XII, 95.

⁴³⁹ *Asclepius* III, 147.

APPENDIX II

Hermetica: the Ancient Greek and Latin Writings Which Contain Religious or Philosophical Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus. Translated by Walter Scott. UK: Solos Press, 1993. (1924 edition of Walter Scott's translation)

Juxtaposed with:

Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English translation, with notes and introduction. Translated by Brian P. Copenhaver. NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Libellus I: "I,' said he, 'am Poimandres, the Mind of the Sovereignty'" (47). "I would fain learn,' said I, 'the things that are, and understand their nature, and get knowledge of God'" (47).

Copenhaver translation: "I am Poimandres' he said, 'mind of sovereignty'" (1). "I said, 'I wish to learn about the things that are, to understand their nature and to know god'" (1).

Libellus I: "for there was sent forth from it an inarticulate cry. But from the Light there came forth a holy Word, which took its stand upon the watery substance; and methought this Word was the voice of the Light" (48).

Copenhaver translation: "Then an inarticulate cry like the voice of fire came forth from it. But from the light...a holy word mounted upon the <watery> nature..." (1).

Libellus I: The Light "is I, even Mind, the first God, who was before the watery substance which appeared out of the darkness; and the Word which came forth from the Light is son of God." In response to Hermes's question "how so?" Poimandres says, "By looking at what you yourself have in you; for in you too, the word is son, and the mind is father of the word" (49). "Now fix your thought upon the Light...and learn to know it" (48).

Copenhaver translation: "I am the light you saw, mind, your god...who existed before the watery nature that appeared out of darkness. The lightgiving word who comes from mind is the son of god." "This is what you must know: that in you which sees and hears is the word of the lord, but your mind is god the father." "Understand the light, then and recognize it" (2).

Libellus I: Poimandres says to Hermes, “You have seen in your mind the archetypal form, which is prior to the beginning of things, and is limitless” (48).

Copenhaver translation: Poimandres says to Hermes, “In your mind you have seen the archetypal form, the preprinciple that exists before a beginning without end” (2).

Libellus I: “And the first Mind, that Mind which is Life and Light, being bisexual, gave birth to another Mind, a Maker of things; and this second Mind made out of fire and air seven Administrators, who encompass with their orbits the world perceived by sense; and their administration is called Destiny” (49).

Copenhaver translation: “The mind who is god, being androgyne and existing as life and light, by speaking gave birth to a second mind, a craftsman, who as god of fire and spirit, crafted seven governors; they encompass the sensible world in circles, and their government is called fate” (2).

Libellus I: “But Mind the Father of all, he who is Life and Light, gave birth to Man, a Being like to Himself. And he took delight in Man, as being His own offspring; for Man was very goodly to look on, bearing the likeness of his Father” (49).

Copenhaver translation: “Mind, the father of all, who is life and light, gave birth to a man like himself whom he loved as his own child. The man was most fair: he had the father’s image” (3).

Libellus I: Man “willed to make things for his own part also; and his Father gave permission, having in himself all the working of the Administrators; and the Administrators took delight in him, and each of them gave him a share of his won nature” (49).

Copenhaver translation: man “wished to make some craftwork, and the father agreed to this. Entering the craftsman’s sphere, where he was to have all authority, the man observed his brother’s craftworks; the governors loved the man, and each gave a share of his own order” (3).

Libellus I: Man, “unlike all other living creatures upon earth, is twofold: He is mortal by reason of his body; he is immortal by reason of the Man of eternal substance. He is immortal, and has all things in his power; yet he suffers the lot of a mortal being subject to Destiny” (50).

Copenhaver translation: “unlike any other living thing on earth, mankind is twofold –in the body mortal but immortal in the essential man. Even though he is immortal and has

authority over all things, mankind is affected by mortality because he is subject to fate” (3).

Libellus I: “If then, being made of Life and Light, you learn to know that you are made of them, you will go back into Life and Light” (52).

Copenhaver translation: “So if you learn that you are from light and life and that you happen to come from them, you shall advance to life once again” (5).

Libellus I: “and becoming Powers themselves, they enter into God. This is the Good; this is the consummation, for those who have gained gnosis” (53). “Seeing that you have received all, why do you not make yourself a guide to those who are worthy of the boon, that so mankind may through you be save by God?” (53).

Copenhaver translation: “This is the final good for those who have received knowledge: to be made god” (6). “Having learned all this, should you not become guide to the worthy so that through you the human race might be saved by god?” (6).

Libellus I: “O men, why have you given yourselves up to death, when you have been granted power to partake of immortality?” (54).

Copenhaver translation: “Why have you surrendered yourselves to death, earthborn men, since you have the right to share in immortality?” (6).

Libellus II: “The movement of the Kosmos then, and of every living being that is material, is caused, not by things outside the body, but by things within it, which operate outwards from within; that is to say, either by soul or by something else that is incorporeal” (56).

Copenhaver translation: “And it happens that the motion of the cosmos and of every living thing made of matter is produced not by things outside the body but by those within it acting upon the outside, by intelligible entities, either soul or spirit or something else incorporeal” (10).

Libellus II: “It is Mind, entire and wholly self-encompassing, free from the erratic movement of things corporeal; it is imperturbable, intangible, standing firm-fixed in itself, containing all things, and maintaining in being all things that are; and it is the light whereby soul is illuminated” (58). “The Good is the archetypal Light; and the Mind and Truth are, so to speak, rays emitted by that Light” (58).

Copenhaver translation: “Mind as a whole wholly enclosing itself, free of all body, unerring, unaffected, untouched, at rest in itself, capable of containing all things and preserving all that exists, and its rays (as it were) are the good, the truth, the archetype of spirit, the archetype of soul” (11).

Libellus V: “He is not himself brought into being in images presented through our sense, but He presents all things to us in such images. It is only things which are brought into being that are presented through sense; coming into being is nothing else than presentation through sense” (64). “He presents all things to us through our sense, and thereby manifests himself through all things” (64). “You can behold God’s image with your eyes, and lay hold on it with your hands” (64). “If you wish to see Him, think on the Sun, think on the course of the moon, think on the order of the stars” (65).

Copenhaver translation: “The very entity that makes visibility does not make itself visible; what <begets> is not itself begotten; what presents images of everything <is not> present to the imagination. For there is imagination only of things begotten. Coming to be is nothing but imagination. Clearly, the one who alone is unbegotten is also unimagined and invisible, but in presenting images of all things he is seen through all of them and in all of them.” “For the lord, who is ungrudging, is seen through the entire cosmos. Can you see understanding and hold it in your hands?” “If you want to see god, consider the sun, consider the circuit of the moon, consider the order of the stars” (18).

Libellus VII: “Stand firm; turn sober.” “This evil of ignorance floods all the land; its current sweeps along the soul which is penned up in the body, and prevents it from coming to anchor in the havens of salvation. Suffer not yourselves then to be borne along down stream by the strong current, but avail yourselves of a backflow, those of you who are able to reach the haven, and cast anchor there, and seek a guide to lead you to the door of the house of knowledge. There you will find the bright light which is pure from darkness” (71).

Copenhaver translation: “Stop and sober yourselves up!” “The vice of ignorance floods the whole earth and utterly destroys the soul shut up on the body, preventing it from anchoring in the havens of deliverance. Surely you will not sink in this great flood? Those of you who can will take the ebb and gain the haven of deliverance and anchor there. Then, seek a guide to take you by the hand and lead you to the portals of knowledge. There shines the light cleansed of darkness” (24).

Libellus VII: “But first you must tear off this garment which you wear, this cloak of darkness, this web of ignorance, this (prop) of evil, this bond of corruption, this living death, this conscious corpse, this tomb you carry about with you, this robber in the house, this enemy who hates the things you seek after, and grudged you the things which you desire. Such is the garment in which you have clothed yourself; and it grips you to itself

and holds you down, that you may not look upward and behold the beauty of the Truth, and the Good that abides above” (71). For it makes sense less what men deem to be their organs of sense, stuffing them up with the gross mass of matter, and cramming them with loathly pleasures, so that you may neither hear of the things you ought to hear of, nor see the things you ought to see” (71).

Copenhaver translation: “But first you must rip off this tunic that you wear, the garment of ignorance, the foundation of vice, the bonds of corruption, the dark cage, the living death, the sentient corpse, the portable tomb, the resident thief, the one who hates through what he loves and envies through what he hates. Such is the odious tunic you have put on. It strangles you and drags you down with it so that you will not hate its viciousness, not look up and see the fair vision of truth and the good that lies within” (24). “...when it made insensible the organ of sense, made them inapparent and unrecognized for what they are, blocked up with the great load of matter and jammed full of loathsome pleasure, so that you do not hear what you must hear nor observe what you must observe” (24).

Libellus X: “knowledge is the perfection of science, and science is the gift of God” (80).

Copenhaver translation: “knowledge is the goal of learning, and learning is a gift from God” (32).

Libellus X: “it is in an earthly body only that the mind and the soul are joined together. The mind cannot, naked and alone, take up its abode in an earthly body” (81).

Copenhaver translation: “In an earthly body occurs the combining of these garments, my son, for the mind cannot seat itself alone and naked in an earthly body” (34).

Libellus X: “We must not shrink then from saying that a man on earth is a mortal god, and that a god in heaven is an immortal man” (84). This is similar to *Libellus XIII* “we have been made gods” (101).

Copenhaver translation: “Therefore, we must dare to say that the human on earth is a mortal god but that god in heaven is an immortal human” (36).

Libellus XI: “The Aeon then is an image of God; The Kosmos is an image of the Aeon. The Sun is an image of the Kosmos; And Man is an image of the Sun” (89).

Copenhaver translation: “Eternity, therefore, is an image of god; the cosmos is an image of eternity; and the sun is an image of the cosmos. The human is an image of the sun” (40).

Libellus XII: “See what power, what quickness is yours.” “If then you do not make yourself equal to God, you cannot apprehend God; for like is known by like. Leap clear of all that is corporeal, and make yourself grow to a like expanse with that greatness which is beyond all measure; rise above all time, and become eternal; then you will apprehend God. Think that for you too nothing is impossible; deem that you too are immortal, and that you are able to grasp all things in your thought, to know every craft and every science; find your home in the haunts of every living creature...” (90). “But if you shut up your soul in your body, and abase yourself...your thought can grasp nothing beautiful and good, if you cleave to the body” (91).

Copenhaver translation: “ See what power you have, what quickness!” Thus, unless you make yourself equal to god, you cannot understand god; like is understood by like. Make yourself grow to immeasurable immensity, outleap all body, outstrip all time, become eternity and you will understand god. Having conceived that nothing is impossible to you, consider yourself immortal and able to understand everything, all art, all learning, the temper of every living thing.” (41). “But if you shut your soul up in the body and abase it...While you are evil and a lover of the body, you can understand none of the things that are beautiful and good” (42).

Libellus XII: “For it is the height of evil not to know God; but to be capable of knowing God, and to wish and hope to know him, is the road which leads straight to the Good; and it is an easy road to travel. Everywhere God will come to meet you, everywhere he will appear to you” (91). “Who is more manifest than God?” (91)

Copenhaver translation: “To be ignorant of the divine is the ultimate vice, but to be able to know, to will and to hope is the [straight and] easy way leading to the good. As you journey, the good will meet you everywhere and will be seen everywhere” (42). “Who is more visible than god?” (42).

Libellus XII: “from wickedness a man can escape, if he has mind in him” (93).

Copenhaver translation: “those who possess reason, whom (as we have said) mind commands, are not affected as the others are. Since they have been freed from vice, they are not affected as a consequence of being evil” (44).

Libellus XII: “when he quits the body, mind and speech will be his guides, and by them he will be brought into the troop of the gods and the souls that have attained to bliss” (95).

Copenhaver translation: “when he has left the body, both these gifts [mind and reasoned speech] will guide him to the troop of the gods and the blessed” (45).

Libellus XII: “Speech then is an image of mind; and mind is an image of God.” “soul is in body, mind is in soul, and God is in mind. The rarest part of matter then is air; the rarest part of air is soul; the rarest part of soul is mind; and the rarest part of mind is God. And God deals with all things, and permeates all things; mind deals with soul; soul deals with air; and air deals with gross matter” (95).

Copenhaver translation: “Reasoned speech, then, is the image and mind of god, as the body is the image of the idea and the idea is the image of the soul. Thus, the finest of matter is air, the finest air is soul, the finest soul is mind and the finest mind is god. And god surrounds everything and permeates everything, while mind surrounds soul, soul surrounds air and air surrounds matter” (46).

Libellus XII: “everything which exists in the Kosmos, everything without exception is in motion; and that which is in motion must be alive” (96).

Copenhaver translation: “everywhere in the cosmos everything is moved, either by decrease or by increase. What is moved also lives” (47).

Libellus XII: “man makes use of all these elements, earth, water, air; yes, and heaven too he beholds, and grasps that also with this sense of sight. And it is not difficult, my son, to contemplate God in thought, or even, if you will, to see him. Look at the order of the Kosmos” (97).

Copenhaver translation: “But mankind uses them all –earth, water, air, fire. He even sees heaven, which he grasps by sensing it. And god, who is energy and power, surrounds everything and permeates everything, and understanding of god is nothing difficult, my child. If you wish also to gaze upon him, look at the order of the cosmos and the careful arrangement of this order” (47).

Libellus XII: “And there is but one way to worship God; it is to be devoid of evil” (98).

Copenhaver translation: “There is but one religion of god, and that is not to be evil” (48).

Libellus XIII: “no one can be saved until he has been born again” (98). Tat asks Hermes, “And what manner of man is he that is brought into being by the Rebirth?” Hermes responds, “He that is born by that birth is another; he is a god, a son of substance; he partakes of the substance of things intelligible, being wholly composed of Powers of God” (98). This man who is reborn is “son of God” (98).

Copenhaver translation: “no one can be saved before being born again” (49). Tat asks Hermes, “And whence comes the begotten, father?” Hermes responds, “The begotten

will be of a different kind, a god and a child of god, the all in all, composed entirely of the powers” (49). Tat asks, “Who is the progenitor of rebirth?” Hermes responds, “The child of god, primal man, by god’s will” (50).

Libellus XIII: “one who has power to apprehend the incorporeal.” “Draw it into you, and it will come; will it, and it comes to be. Stop the working of your bodily senses, and then will deity be born in you. But if you would be born again, you must cleanse yourself from the irrational torments of matter” (100). “When a man is born again; it is no longer body of three dimensions that he perceives, but the incorporeal.” Tat responds, “Father, now that I see in mind, I see myself to be the All. I am in heaven and in earth, in water, and in air...I am present everywhere” (101). Hermes states to Tat, “Do you not know that you have become a god, and a son of the One, even as I have?” (102).

Copenhaver translation: “Draw it to you, and it will come, wish it, and it happens. Leave the senses of the body idle, and the birth of divinity will begin. Cleanse yourself of the irrational torments of matter” (50). “This my child, is rebirth: no longer picturing things in three bodily dimensions” (52). Tat states, “Father, I see the universe and I see myself in mind” (52). “Since god has made me tranquil...I no longer picture things with the sight of my eyes but with the mental energy that goes through the powers. I am in heaven, in earth, in water, in air...I am...everywhere” (51). Hermes states to Tat, “Do you not know that you have been born a god and a child of the one, as I, too, have?” (52).

Libellus XIII: “Ye Powers that are within me” (102).

Copenhaver translation: “Powers within me” (53).

Libellus XVI: “And that is why God has subjected things to change; for by transmutation the things made are purged of evil” (107). “Immortal bodies undergo change without dissolution, but the changes of mortal bodies are accompanied by dissolution” (109).

Copenhaver translation: “But the persistence of generation makes evil bloom like a sore, which is why god has made change, to repurify generation” (56). “In an immortal body the change is without dissolution; in a mortal body there is dissolution” (59).

Libellus XVII: “To these daemons is given dominion over all things upon earth; they are also the authors of the disturbances upon the earth, and work manifold trouble both for cities and nations collectively and for individual men. For they mould our souls into another shape.” “But the rational part of the soul remains free from the dominion of the daemons, and fit to receive God into itself. If then the rational part of a man’s soul is illumined by a ray of light from God, for that man the working of the daemons is brought to naught; for no daemon and no god (i.e. planetary god) has power against a single ray of the light of God. But such men are few indeed; and all others are led and driven, soul

and body, by the daemons, setting their hearts and affections on the workings of the daemons. This is that love which is devoid of reason, that love which goes astray and leads men astray. The daemons then govern all our earthly life, using our bodies as their instruments; and this government Hermes called ‘destiny’” (110-111). This is similar to *Stobaeus* Excerpt VI: “Decans stand round about all things in the Kosmos as guardians, holding all things together, and watching over the good order of all things” (161).

Copenhaver translation: “They have all been granted authority over the things of the earth and over the troubles of the earth, and they produce change and tumult collectively for cities and nations, individually for each person. They reshape our souls to their won ends...” But the rational part of the soul stands unmastered by the demons, suitable as a receptacle for god. Thus, if by way of the sun anyone has a ray shining upon him in his rational part (and the totality of those enlightened is a few), the demons’ effect on him is nullified. For none – neither demons nor gods – can do anything against a single ray of god. All others the demons carry off as spoils, both souls and bodies, since they are fond of the demons’ energies and acquiesce in them. {And it is this love that} misleads and is misled. So, with our bodies as their instruments, the demons govern this earthly government. Hermes has called this government ‘fate’” (60-61).

Libellus XVII: “Well then, as bodies are reflected in mirrors, so incorporeal things are reflected in bodies, and the intelligible Kosmos is reflected in the sensible Kosmos. Therefore, my King, worship the statues of the gods, seeing that these statues too have in them forms which come from the intelligible Kosmos” (111).

Copenhaver translation: “Thus, there are reflections of the incorporeals in corporeals and of corporeals in incorporeals – from the sensible to the intelligible cosmos, that is, and from the intelligible to the sensible. Therefore, my king, adore the statues, because they, too, possess forms from the intelligible cosmos” (62).

Asclepius I: “Have I not told you this before, that all things are one, and the One is all things, seeing that all things were in the Creator before he created them all? And rightly has it been said of him that he is all things; for all things are parts of him” (116). “all individuals are united to the whole; so that we see that the whole is one, and of the one are all things. The elements through which all matter has been imbued with form are four in number, fire water, earth, and air; but matter is one, soul is one, and God is one” (116-117).

Copenhaver translation: “Did I not say that all are one and one all inasmuch as all were in the creator before he created them all? Not unjustly was he called all, whose member are all” (68). “they are united to this end: that the whole might seem to be one and that all might seem to be from one. The elements by which the whole of matter has been formed, then, are four: fire, water, earth, air. One matter, one soul and one god” (68).

Asclepius I: “Accordingly, the man who, in virtue of the mind in him, through which he is akin to the gods, has attached himself to them by pious devotion, becomes like to the gods; he who has attached himself to daemons becomes like to the daemons” (118). “Man is a marvel then, Asclepius; honor and reverence to such a being! Man takes on him the attributes of a god, as though he were himself a god” (118). “He raises reverent eyes to heaven above; he tends the earth below. Blest in his intermediate station, he is so placed that he love all below him, and is loved by all above him. He has access to all; he descends to the depths of the sea by the keenness of his thought; and heaven is not found too high for him; for he measures it by his sagacity, as though it were within his reach” (119). “Man is all things; man is everywhere” (119).

Copenhaver translation: Hence, one who has joined himself to the gods in divine reverence, using the mind that joins him to the gods, almost attains divinity. And one who has been joined to the demons attains their condition” (69). Because of this, Asclepius, a human being is a great wonder, a living thing to be worshipped and honored: for he changed his nature into a god’s” (69). “He looks up to heaven. He has been put in the happier place of middle status so that he might cherish those beneath him and be cherished by those above him. He cultivates the earth; he swiftly mixes into the elements; he plumbs the depths of the sea in the keenness of his mind. Everything is permitted him: heaven itself seems not too high, for he measures it in his clever thinking as if it were nearby” (70). “He is everything, and he is everywhere” (70).

Asclepius I: “Mind, a fifth component part, which comes from the aether, has been bestowed on man alone; and of all beings that have soul, man is the only one whose faculty of cognition is, by this gift of mind, so strengthened, elevated, and exalted, that he can attain to knowledge of the truth concerning God” (119).

Copenhaver translation: “And in humans consciousness is added to understanding: only this fifth part, granted to humanity, comes from the aether. Of all living things, consciousness equips only the human, exalts it, raises it up to understand the divine plan” (70).

Asclepius I: “such men as have attained to the great happiness of acquiring that divine faculty of apprehending truth, that diviner sort of mind, which exists only in God and in the intellect of man” (119).

Copenhaver translation: “those humans who have gained so much happiness that they grasp the divine consciousness of understanding, the diviner consciousness that is only in god and in human understanding” (70).

Asclepius I: “Not all men, Asclepius, have attained to true knowledge. Many men, yielding to reckless impulse, and seeing nothing of the truth, are misled by illusions and

these illusions breed evil in their hearts, and transform man, the best of living beings, into a wild and savage beast” (120).

Copenhaver translation: “Not all have gained true understanding, Asclepius. They are deceived, pursuing, on rash impulse and without due consideration of reason, an image that begets malice in their minds and transforms the best of living things into a beastly nature with brutal habits” (70).

Asclepius I: “this earthly part of the universe is kept in order by means of man’s knowledge and application of the arts and sciences. For God willed that the universe should not be complete until man had done his part” (121).

Copenhaver translation: “Learning the arts and sciences and using them preserves this earthly part of the world; god will it that the world would be incomplete without them” (71).

Asclepius I: “in respect of the divine part of him, which is composed of other and higher elements, so to speak, namely, mind, intellect, spirit, and reason, he is found capable of rising to heaven; but in respect of his material part, which consist of fire, water, earth, and air, he is mortal, and remains on earth, that he may not leave forsaken and abandoned all things that are entrusted to his keeping” (123). “But goodness is to be seen in its perfection only when man’s virtue is fortified against desire” (123).

Copenhaver translation: ““it happens that in the part that makes him divine, he seems able to rise up to heaven, as if from higher elements – soul and consciousness, spirit and reason. But in his material part – consisting of fire <and earth,> water and air – he remains fixed on the ground, a mortal, lest he disregard all the terms of his charge as void and empty” (73). “Goodness is deemed perfect only when fortified by the virtue of disdain” (73).

Asclepius II: “Matter then is generative by itself, without the help of anything else” (125).

Copenhaver translation: “The whole of matter’s quality, then, is to be creative, even though it was not created” (75).

Asclepius III: “Such is the new birth of the Kosmos; it is a making again of all things good, a holy and awestrking restoration of all nature; and it is wrought in the process of time by the eternal will of God” (138). “The Kosmos is God’s image” (138).

Copenhaver translation: “And this will be the geniture of the world: a reformation of all good things and a restitution, most holy and most reverent, of nature itself, reordered in

the course of time <but through an act of will>, which is and was everlasting and without beginning” (83). “the world is his image - <good> from good” (83).

Asclepius III: With knowledge “the darkness of error is dispelled from the soul, and truth is seen in all its brightness, and so man’s consciousness is wholly absorbed in the knowledge of God” (147).

Copenhaver translation: “ And when the shadows of error have been scattered from a person’s soul and he has perceived the light of truth, he couples himself with divine understanding in his whole consciousness” (84).

Epilogue: “our minds have been fed full with discourse concerning things divine” (147).

Copenhaver translation: “We have dealt enough with theology, and we souls have eaten our fill, so to speak” (92).

Copenhaver’s symbol key:

Angled brackets < >: insertion of a word or words

Square brackets []: removal of a word or words

Pointed brackets { }: a word or words regarded as unintelligible or otherwise problematic

Scott’s version includes the *Stobaeus* Fragments which Copenhaver does not translate:

Stobaeus Excerpt VI: Hermes to Tat: “there is a body which encloses all things. You must conceive the shape of that body as circular; for such is the shape of the universe” (161).

Stobaeus Excerpt VI: Hermes to Tat: “A man must train his soul in this life” (163). “But men who love the body will never see the vision of the Beautiful and Good” (163).

Stobaeus Excerpt IX: Hermes to Tat: “Now the intelligible substance, if it has draw near to God, has power over itself, [i.e. has free will]...it is not subject to Necessity...But if it falls away from God, it chooses the corporeal world, and in that way it becomes subject to Necessity, which rules over the Kosmos” (165).

Stobaeus Excerpt XI: Hermes to Tat: “Moreover, my teaching has a certain property which is peculiar to it; it urges on bad men to worse wickedness...The living being called man is inclined to evil; he is brought up amidst evil, and therefore he takes pleasure in it. If then this being is told that the Kosmos has had a beginning, and that all things take place by necessity, inasmuch as Destiny governs all,—if he is told that, he will be far

worse that he was before; for he will despise the Kosmos, as a thing that has had a beginning, and he will put off on Destiny the responsibility for evil, and so he will never refrain from any evil deed” (170).

Stobaeus Excerpt XVII: “Soul then, Ammon, is a substance which is self-determining” “but when it has chosen that course of life which is dependent on Destiny, and it takes on as an appendage something irrational, which is similar to matter” (173). From the teachings of Hermes: “And repugnance, if it has formed a habit of will according to the reasoning of the soul, becomes courage, and is not led astray by cowardice” (174). “And when repugnance and desire have agreed together, and have formed a habit of will that is well-balance, and both of them cleave to the reasoning of the soul, then justice comes into being; for their well-balanced habit of will takes form repugnance its excess, and raises to equality that which is lacking in desire. And repugnance and desire are commanded by the intelligent substance; this takes the lead, like a commander, and the reason accompanies it, like a counselor” (174).

Stobaeus Excerpt XVIII: from the teachings of Hermes: “But we have power to choose; for it is in our power to choose the better, and likewise to choose the worse; for the soul, when it cleaves to evil [bodily or material] things, draws near to corporeal nature, and for this reason the man who has chosen the worse is under the dominion of Destiny. The intelligent substance in us is self-determining. The intelligent substance remains ever in the same state w/o change, nor partaking of the nature of the things which come into being, and therefore Destiny has no hold on it” (174).

Stobaeus Excerpt XXIII: Isis to Horus: “the destruction of your bodies then will be the starting-point for a rebirth” (187).

Fragments: #19 - “Those men who are devoid of mind are merely led along in the train of Destiny. They have no conception of anything incorporeal, and they do not rightly understand the meaning of Destiny, that very power by which they are led; they complain of the bodily discipline which she imposes, and they do not recognize any other kind of happiness than that which she confers (208).

Fragments: #20 - “philosophers are above Destiny; for they find no joy in the happiness she gives, since they hold pleasures in subjection; and they are not harmed by the ills she inflicts, because they dwell at all times in the immaterial world” (209).

APPENDIX III

Alchemy

Libellus XVI: “for by transmutation the things made are purges of evil” (107).

Libellus XII: “from wickedness a man can escape, if he has mind in him” (93).

Asclepius III: New birth of the Kosmos: “it is a making again of all things good, a holy and awestrking restoration of all nature” (138).

Stobaeus Excerpt VI: Hermes to Tat: “there is a body which encloses all things. You must conceive the shape of that body as circular; for such is the shape of the universe” (161).

Stobaeus Excerpt XXIII: Isis to Horus: “the destruction of your bodies then will be the starting-point for a rebirth” (187).

Libellus VII: “But first you must tear off this garment which you wear, this cloak of darkness, this web of ignorance, this (prop) of evil, this bond of corruption, this living death...Such is the garment in which you have clothed yourself; and it grips you to itself and holds you down, that you may not look upward and behold the beauty of the Truth, and the Good that abides above, and hate the evil of this thing...For it makes sense less what men deem to be their organs of sense, stuffing them up with the gross mass of matter, and cramming them with loathly pleasures, so that you may neither hear of the things you ought to hear of, nor see the things you ought to see” (71).

Astrology

Libellus XVII: daemons have dominion over all things upon earth – they are the authors of blessing and disturbances upon the earth: “But the rational part of the soul remains free from the dominion of the daemons, and fit to receive God into itself. If then the rational part of a man’s soul is illumined by a ray of light from God, for that man the working of the daemons is brought to naught; for no daemon and no god (planetary god) has power against a single ray of the light of God. But such men are few indeed; and all others are led and driven, soul and body, by the daemons” (110) – *Stobaeus* Excerpt VI: Hermes to Tat: “Decans stand round about all things in the Kosmos as guardians, holding all things together, and watching over the good order of all things” (161).

Libellus XVII: “The daemons then govern all our earthly life, using our bodies as their instruments; and this government Hermes called ‘destiny’” (111).

Asclepius I: “Many men, yielding to reckless impulse, and seeing nothing of the truth, are misled by illusions and these illusions breed evil in their hearts, and transform man, the best of living beings, into a wild and savage beast” (120).

Asclepius III: “Over the pious man neither evil daemon nor destiny has dominion” (146).

Asclepius I: “in respect of the divine part of him, which is composed of other and higher elements, so to speak, namely, mind, intellect, spirit, and reason, he is found capable of rising to heaven; but in respect of his material part, which consist of fire, water, earth, and air, he is mortal, and remains on earth, that he may not leave forsaken and abandoned all things that are entrusted to his keeping” (123).

Asclepius I: “But goodness is to be seen in its perfection only when man’s virtue is fortified against desire” (123).

Asclepius III: “reason and knowledge, whereby they might repel and put away from them the evil passions inherent in their bodies” (135).

Stobaeus Excerpt IX: Hermes to Tat: “Now the intelligible substance, if it has draw near to God, has power over itself, [i.e. has free will]...it is not subject to Necessity...But if it falls away form God, it chooses the corporeal world, and in that way it becomes subject to Necessity, which rules over the Kosmos” (165).

Stobaeus Excerpt XI: Hermes to Tat: “Moreover, my teaching has a certain property which is peculiar to it; it urges on bad men to worse wickedness...The living being called man is inclined to evil; he is brought up amidst evil, and therefore he takes pleasure in it. If then this being is told that the Kosmos has had a beginning, and that all things take place by necessity, inasmuch as Destiny governs all,—if he is told that, he will be far worse that he was before; for he will despise the Kosmos, as a thing that has had a beginning, and he will put off on Destiny the responsibility for evil, and so he will never refrain from any evil deed” (170).

Fragments: #19 - “Those men who are devoid of mind are merely led along in the train of Destiny” (208).

Fragments: #20 - “philosophers are above Destiny; for they find no joy in the happiness she gives, since they hold pleasures in subjection; and they are not harmed by the ills she inflicts, because they dwell at all times in the immaterial world” (209).

Theurgy

Asclepius I: “such men as have attained to the great happiness of acquiring that divine faculty of apprehending truth, that diviner sort of mind, which exists only in God and in the intellect of man” (119).

Libellus II : “The movement of the Kosmos then, and of every living being that is material, is caused, not by things outside the body, but by things within it, which operate outwards from within; that is to say, either by soul or by something else that is incorporeal” (56).

Libellus VII: “Suffer not yourselves then to be borne along down stream by the strong current, but avail yourselves of a backflow, those of you who are able to reach the haven,

and cast anchor there, and seek a guide to lead you to the door of the house of knowledge. There you will find the bright light which is pure from darkness” (71).

Libellus XII: “when he quite the body, mind and speech will be his guides, and by them he will be brought into the troop of the gods and the souls that have attained to bliss” (95).

Libellus XIII: “power to apprehend the incorporeal”: “Draw it into you, and it will come; will it, and it comes to be. Stop the working of your bodily senses, and then will deity be born in you” (100).

Asclepius III: “the darkness of error is dispelled from the soul, and truth is seen in all its brightness, and so man’s consciousness is wholly absorbed in the knowledge of God” (147). *Epilogue*: when “our minds have been fed full with discourse concerning things divine” (147).

Stobaeus Excerpt VI: Hermes to Tat: “A man must train his soul in this life” (163). “But men who love the body will never see the vision of the Beautiful and Good” (163).

Stobaeus Excerpt XVII: from the teachings of Hermes: “And repugnance, if it has formed a habit of will according to the reasoning of the soul, becomes courage, and is not led astray by cowardice” (174). “And when repugnance and desire have agreed together, and have formed a habit of will that is well-balance, and both of them cleave to the reasoning of the soul, then justice comes into being; for their well-balanced habit of will takes form repugnance its excess, and raises to equality that which is lacking in desire. And repugnance and desire are commanded by the intelligent substance; this takes the lead, like a commander, and the reason accompanies it, like a counselor” (174).

Stobaeus Excerpt XVIII: from the teachings of Hermes: “But we have power to choose; for it is in our power to choose the better, and likewise to choose the worse; for the soul, when it cleaves to evil [bodily or material] things, draws near to corporeal nature, and for this reason the man who has chosen the worse is under the dominion of Destiny. The intelligent substance in us is self-determining/. The intelligent substance remains ever in the same state w/o change, nor partaking of the nature of the things which come into being, and therefore Destiny has no hold on it” (174).

APPENDIX IV

The first paragraph of the *Fama* 1616 reads:

Seeing the only wise and merciful God in these latter days hath poured out so richly his mercy and goodness to mankind, whereby we do attain more and more to the perfect knowledge of his Son Jesus Christ and Nature, that justly we may boast of the happy time, wherein there is not only discovered unto us the half part of the world, which was heretofore unknown and hidden, but he hath also made manifest unto us many wonderful, and never heretofore seen, works and creatures of Nature, and moreover hath raised men, imbued with great wisdom, who might partly renew and reduce all arts (in this our age spotted and imperfect) to perfection; so that finally man might thereby understand his own nobleness and worth, and why he is called Microcosmus, and how far his knowledge extendeth into Nature.⁴⁴⁰

Book II of *The Advancement of Learning* 1605 reads:

and this proficiencie in navigation and discoveries may plant also an expectation of the further proficiencie and augmentation of all sciences; because it may seem they are ordained by God to be coevals, that is, to meet in one age. For so the prophet Daniel speaking of the latter times foretelleth, “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” [Daniel 12:4]: as if the openness and through-passage of the world and the increase of knowledge we appointed to be in the same age; as we see it is already performed in great part.⁴⁴¹

Bacon transformed the current thinking of his day and molded a new hybrid epistemology that later occult philosophical authors would in turn appropriate, redecorate, and circulate. A major similarity between the Hermetic Rosicrucian texts and Bacon’s *New Atlantis* is how they viewed Christ in their brotherhood. In the *Confessio* (1615), which completes the earlier manifesto *Fama*, the brotherhood felt the need to defend itself from the accusations of un-Christian conduct launched at the Fraternity.⁴⁴² The brothers say they profess Christ not in the exoteric popular Christian sense in that they condemn the pope, rather in the true esoteric Christian sense in that they lead a true Christian life: to study the works of God not for profit but for charitable and noble ends,⁴⁴³ and addict themselves to the true philosophy, which is to gain perfect knowledge of nature and of the process by which Jesus was able to perform miracles.⁴⁴⁴ Bacon espouses similar ideas about an enlightened Christianity in *New Atlantis* where all people seem to lead a Christian life even without a priest to regulate morals and faith and where there is a new role for Jews freed from both pressures to convert to Christianity and old parochialism.

⁴⁴⁰ See Yates’ *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* for the *Fama* text in the Appendix, 298.

⁴⁴¹ *Advancement*, 84. See also same quotation in *Novum* XCIII, 92. Bacon’s inclusion of the biblical reference provides religious endorsement for the new geographical discoveries as well as the advancement of science because better knowledge of the world would glorify its creator. This biblical passage is included in the title page illustration for the *Instauratio Magna*.

⁴⁴² An example of un-Christian accusations can be found in “Horrible Pacts with the Devil” pamphlet.

⁴⁴³ See Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* for the *Confessio* text in the Appendix, 321.

⁴⁴⁴ See the first paragraph in the *Fama*: “we do attain more and more to the perfect knowledge of his Son Jesus Christ and Nature” 298.

APPENDIX V

Editions and Commentaries on the *Corpus Hermeticum*:⁴⁴⁵

1. Marsilio Ficino's translation of CH I-XIV, *Mercurii Trismegisti Pimander, seu libr de potestate et sapientia Dei*, finished 1463 and printed in 1471 at Treviso.
2. William Caxton, *The dictes or sayensis of the philosophers*, 1477. William Baldwin and Thomas Palfreyman made subsequent editions in the 16th century.
3. John Doget, *Examinatorium in Phaedonem Platonis*, 15th century.
4. Lefevre d' Etaples, *Pimander* CH I-XVI, Paris 1494 and printed in 1505 together with Ludovico Lazzarelli's *Crater Hermetis* and the *Asclepius*. Lazarelli translated CH XVI, which was unknown to Ficino.
5. Giovanni Nesi, *Oraculum de novo saeculo*, Florence 1497.
6. Johann Scheffler, *Aureum planeque opusculum Mercurri Trismigeisti, de potestate ac sapientia dei*, Augsburg 1503.
7. Tommaso Benci, *Il Pimadro di Mercurio Trismegisto*, Florence 1548.
8. Gabriel du Preau, edition of *Pimander: Mercure Trismegiste Hermes Tres ancien Theologien et excellent Philosophe. de la puissance et sapience de Dieu*, Paris 1549 printed with Lazarelli's *Crater Hermetis* and republished 1557.
9. Partial edition of the Fragments of *Stobaeus* by Trincauelli, Venice 1553/1556 and completed by Canter in 1575.
10. The 1st edition of the Greek text of CH by Turnebus, Paris 1554 with Vergerius' Preface, Ficino's Latin translation, and commentaries by Lefevre.
11. The new Greco-Latin edition of *Pimander*, Bishop Foix de Candale, Bordeaux 1574 & 1579 with French commentary entitled *Le Pimandre de Mercure Trismegiste, de la philosophie chrestienne, cognoissance du verbe divine*, 1587.
12. Basel edition of Ficino's *Opera* 1576 with numerous passages on Hermetism.
13. An Enormous edition with commentary by Franciscan Hannibal Rossel, *Pymander Mercurii Trismegisti*, 6 Vols., Krakow 1585 & 1590, Cologne 1630.
14. Dutch translation of CH I-XVI, Antwerp 1580.
15. Francesco Patrizi, *Nova de universes philosophia*, Ferrara 1590, Venice 1593. Patrizi used Turnebus and Foix de Candale's versions together with new Latin translation and a vigorous defense of Hermetism.
16. Sir Philip Sidney, English translation of Mornay's *Treatise on the Truth*, 1587.
17. English translation by John Everard, London 1650, reissued in 1657 with the *Asclepius* and commentaries by Lefevre d' Etaples.
18. The first German translation of *Pimander* was in 1706.

⁴⁴⁵ See Faivre's *The Eternal Hermes*, 184-200.

APPENDIX VI

Renaissance and Restoration Texts Showing Influence of Hermetism:⁴⁴⁶

1. Symphorie Champier, *Liver de quadruplici vita, Theologia Asclepii Hermetis Trismegisti discipulicum commentaries euusdem*, Lyon 1507.
2. Thomas More, *Life of Picus*, London 1510, and *Utopia*, London 1516.
3. Johann Trithemius, *De septem scundeis*, Nuremberg 1522.
4. Francesco Giorgi of Venice, *De harmonia mundi*, Venice 1525. French translation by Guy Lefevre de la Boderie, Paris 1579. See also Giorgi's *Probemata*, Paris 1536.
5. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia*, Cologne 1533.
6. Agostino Steuco, *De perenni philosophia*, Lyon 1540 & 1590.
7. Guilio Camillo Delminio, *L'Idea del teatro*, Florence/Venice 1550.
8. John Dee, *Propaedeumata Aphoristic*, London 1558 & 1568. See also *Monas Hieroglyphia*, Antwerp 1565.
9. Guy Leferre de la Boderie, *La Galliade*, Paris 1578.
10. Pontus de Tyard, *Les discourse philosophiques*, Paris 1578.
11. Philippe Du Plessis-Mornay, *De la verite de la religion chrestienne*, Antwerp 1582.
12. Alexander Dicson, *Deumbra rationis*, London 1584.
13. Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queen*, London 1590 & 1596.
14. Mutius Pansa, *De osculo seu consensus ethnicae et christianae philosophiae*, Marburg 1605.
15. Jean-Pierre Camus, *Diversites*, Paris 1609 & 1615
16. Sir Walter Raleigh, *History of the World*, London 1609.
17. Philippe Cluver, *Germaniae antique libri tres*, Lyon 1616.
18. Henricus Nollus, *Theoria Philosophiae Hermeticae*, Copenhagen 1617.
19. Robert Fludd, *Utriusque cosmic historia*, Oppenheim 1617-21.
20. Joseph Stellatus (Christoph Hirsch), *Pegasus Firmamenti. Sive intrductio brevis in veterum Sapientiam*, 1618.
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⁴⁴⁶ See Faivre's *The Eternal Hermes*, 184-200. In the 18th century, Hermetism is used as a synonym for "alchemy" and "Rosicruciansim." See Daniel Colbergs' *Das Platonisch Hermetische Christentum*, Frankfurt 1690 & 1710.

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